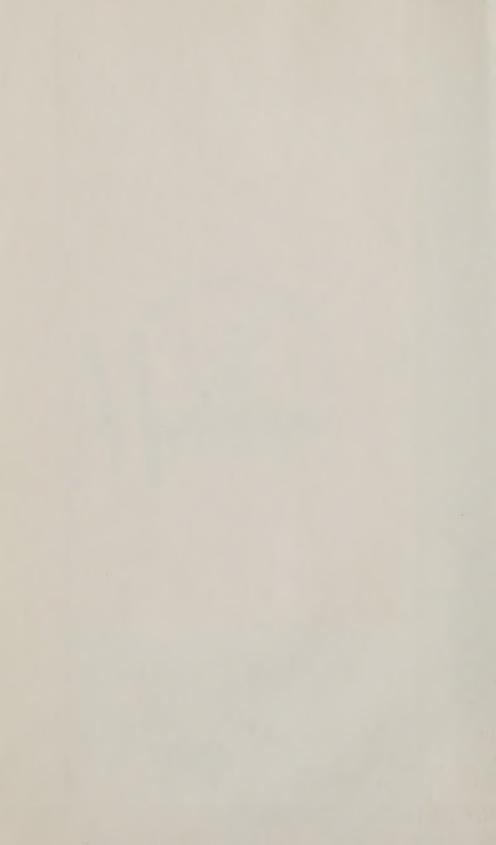
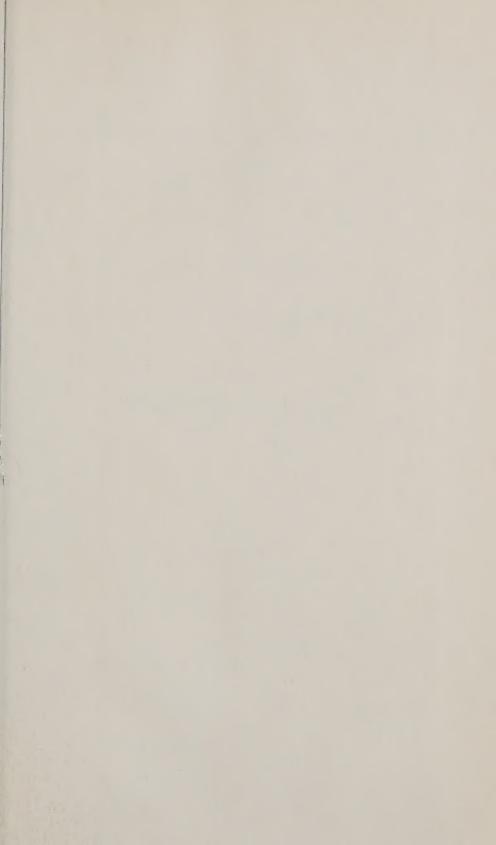


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Books by Kate Douglas Wiggin

The Old Peabody Pew. Illustrated by Alice Barber Ste-Phens.

Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm.

New Chronicles of Rebecca. Illustrated by F. C. Yohn.

Rose o' the River. Illustrated by George Wright.

The Affair at the Inn. Illustrated by MARTIN JUSTICE.

The Birds' Christmas Carol. Illustrated.

The Story of Patsy. Illustrated.

The Diary of a Goose Girl. Illustrated by C. A. Shepperson.

A Cathedral Courtship and Penelope's English Experiences. Illustrated by CLIFFORD CARLETON.

A Cathedral Courtship. Holiday Edition. Enlarged, and with illustrations by Charles E. Brock.

Penelope's Progress. Experiences in Scotland.

Penelope's Irish Experiences.

Penelope's Experiences. Holiday Edition. In three volumes. Illustrated by Charles E. Brock. I. England; II. Scotland; III. Ireland.

Marm Lisa.

The Village Watch-Tower. Short Stories.

Polly Oliver's Problem. A Story for Girls. Illustrated.

Timothy's Quest. A Story for Anybody, Young or Old, who cares to read it.

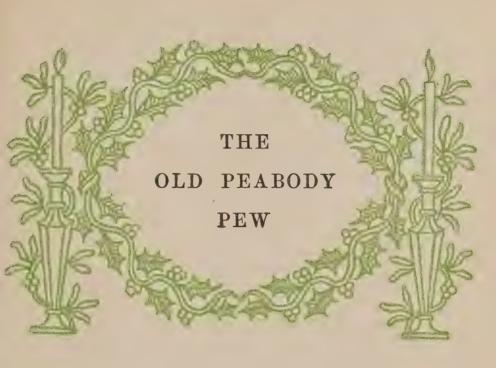
Timothy's Quest. Holiday Edition. Illustrated by OLIVER HER-FORD.

A Summer in a Cañon. A California Story. Illustrated by FRANK T. MERRILL.

Nine Love Songs and a Carol. Poems set to music by Mrs. Wiggin.

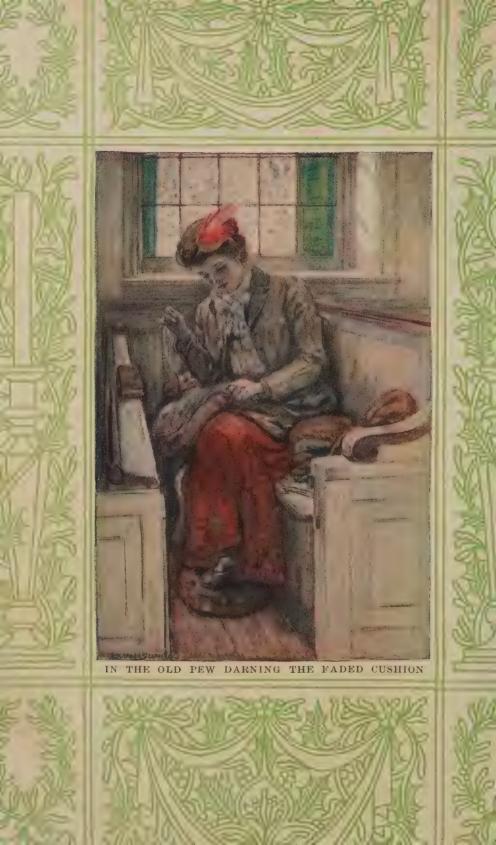
houghton, Mifflin and Company, Publishers

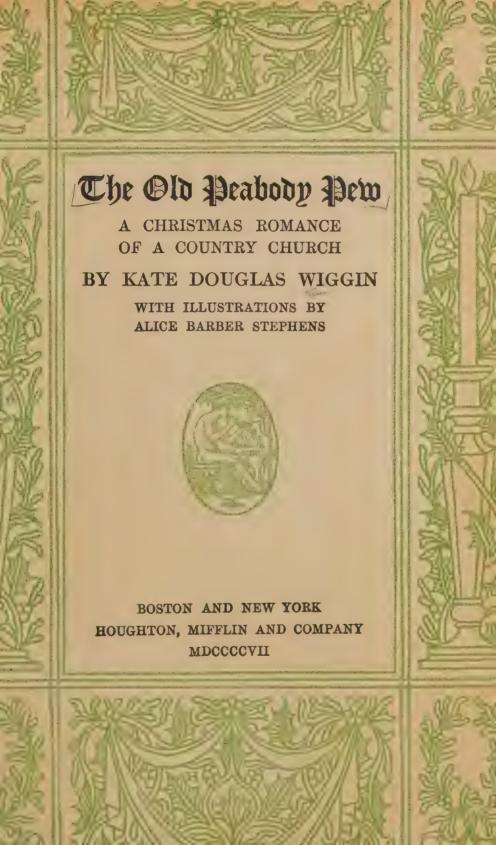
BOSTON AND NEW YORK









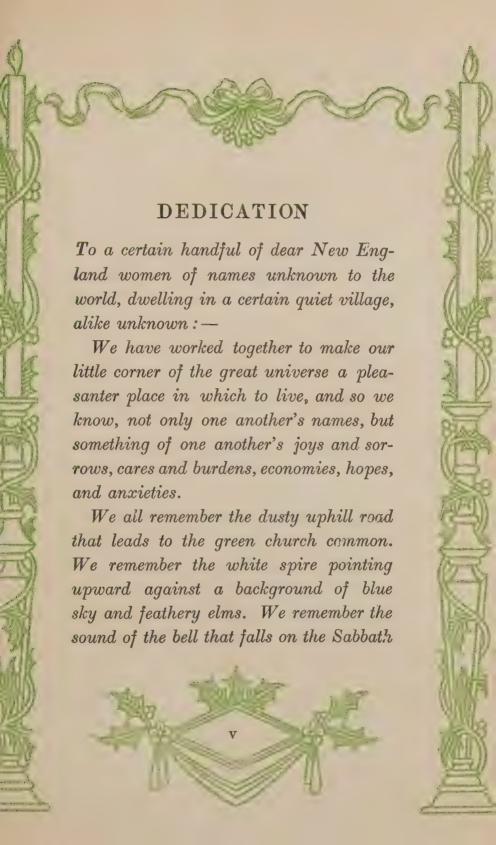


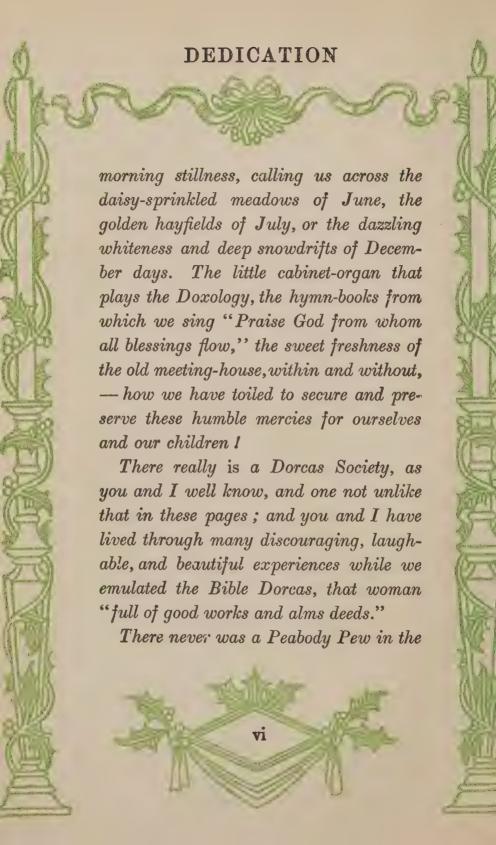
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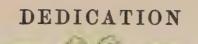
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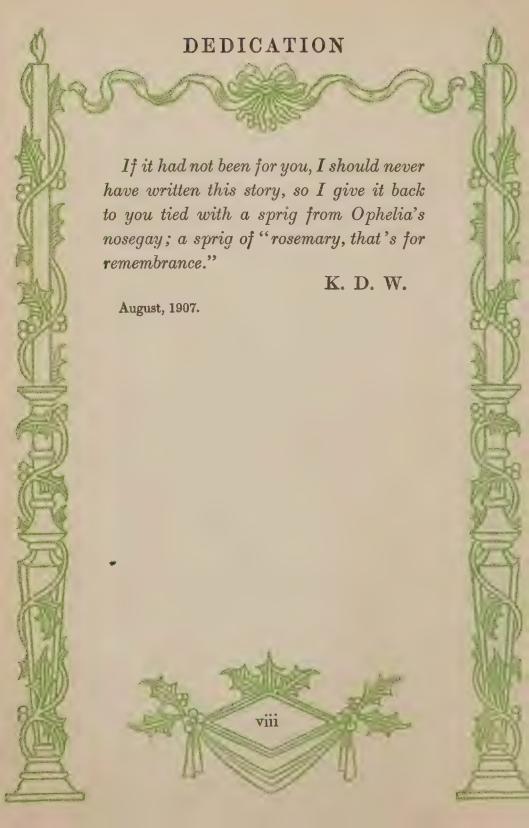


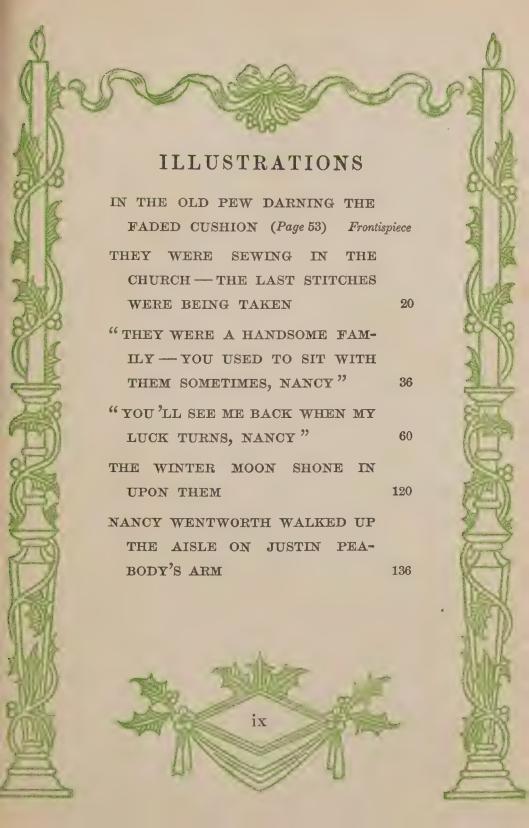


Tory Hill Meeting-House, and Nancy's love story and Justin's never happened within its century-old walls; but I have imagined only one of the many romances that have had their birth under the shadow of that steeple, did we but realize it.

As you have sat there on open-windowed Sundays, looking across purple clover-fields to blue distant mountains, watching the palm-leaf fans swaying to and fro in the warm stillness before sermon time, did not the place seem full of memories, for has not the life of two villages ebbed and flowed beneath that ancient roof? You heard the hum of droning bees and followed the airy wings of butterflies fluttering over the gravestones in the old churchyard, and underneath almost every moss-grown tablet some humble romance lies buried and all but forgotten.



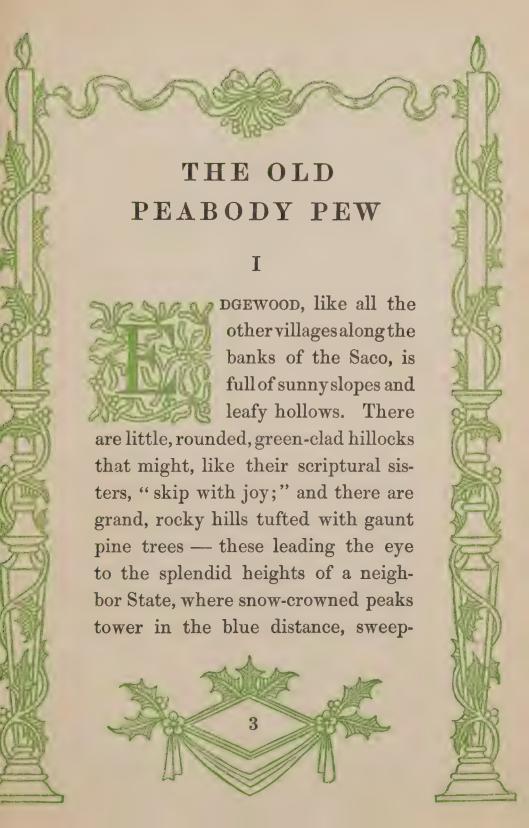


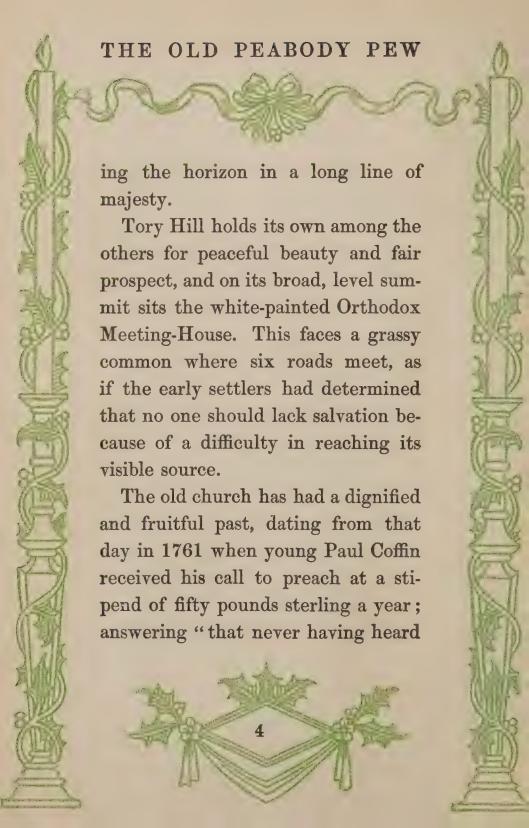


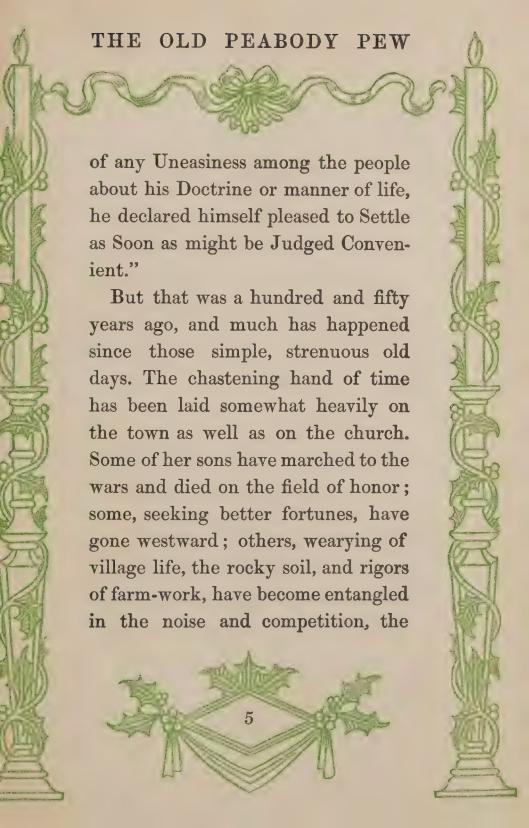


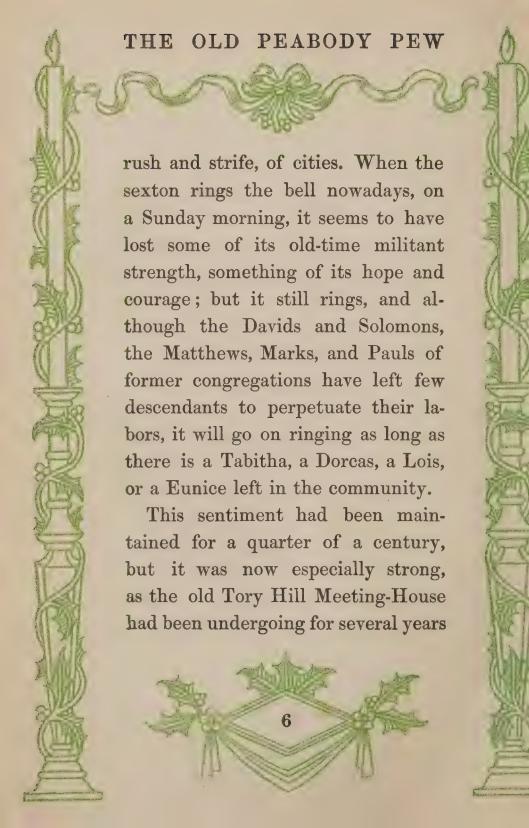


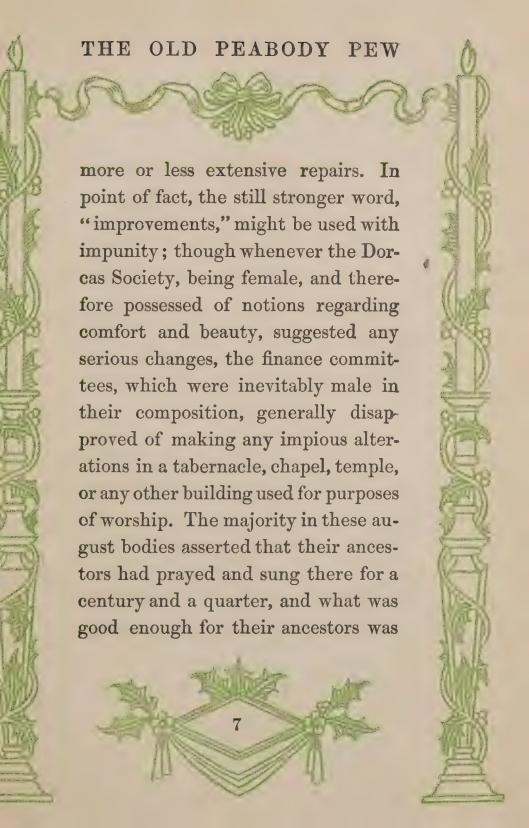


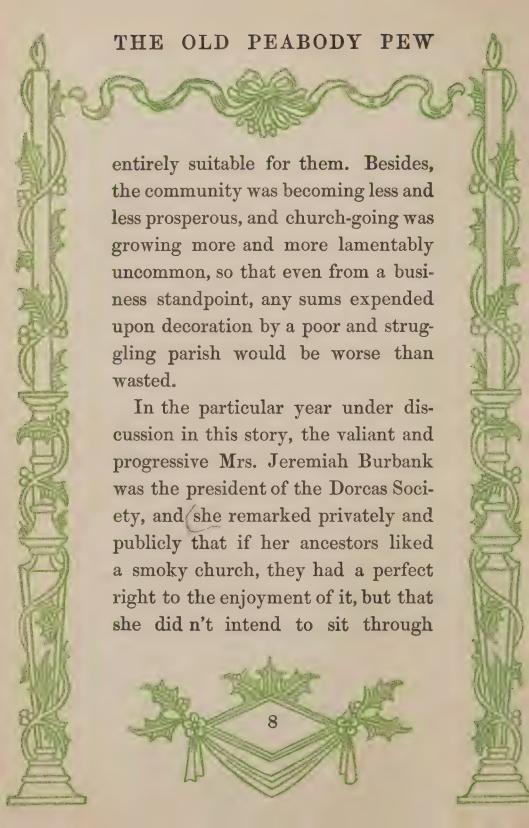


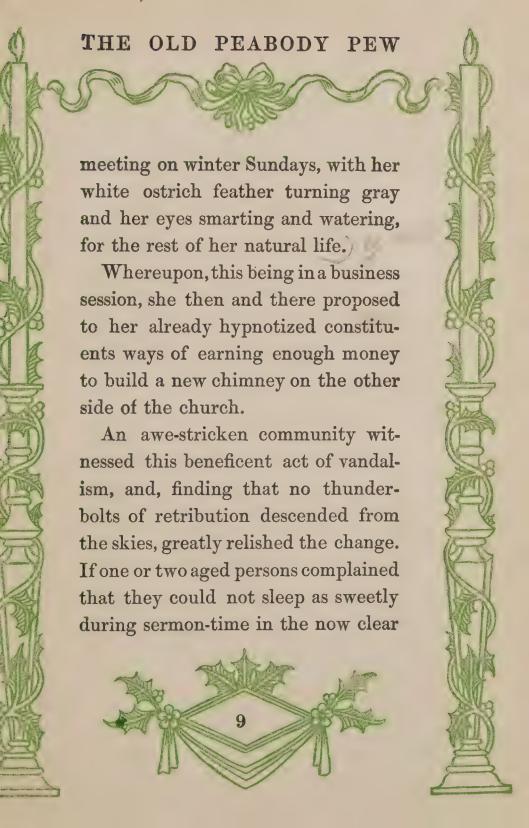


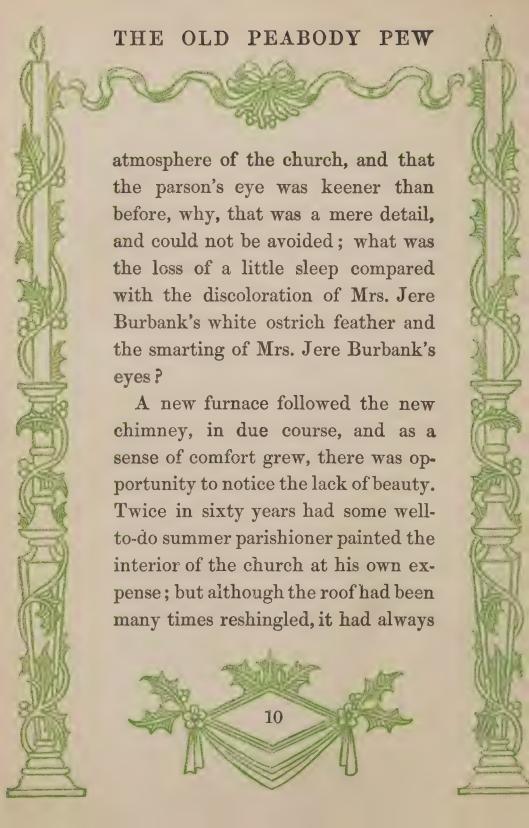


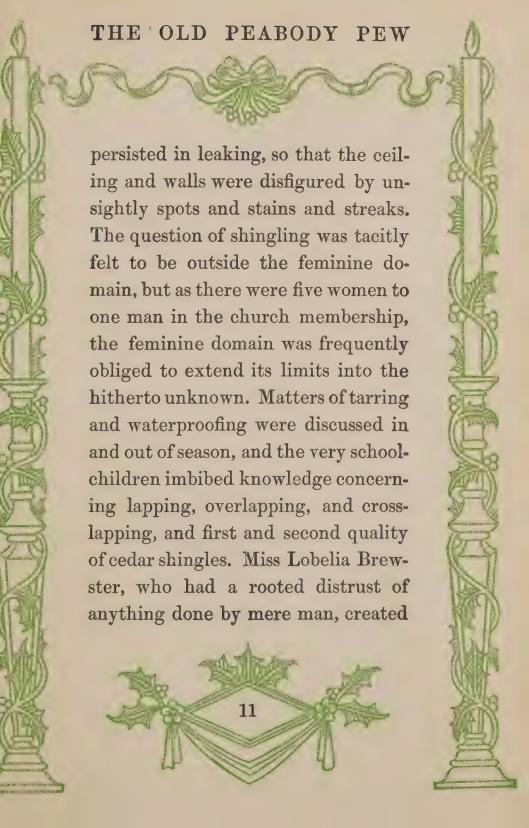


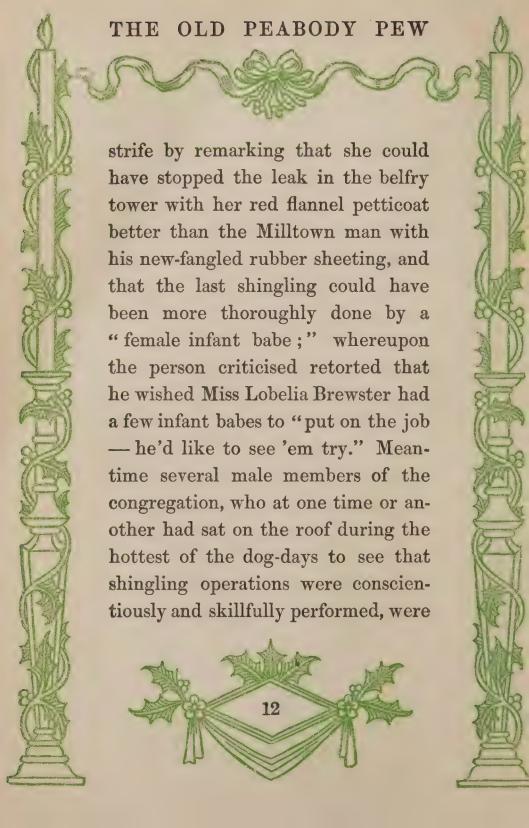


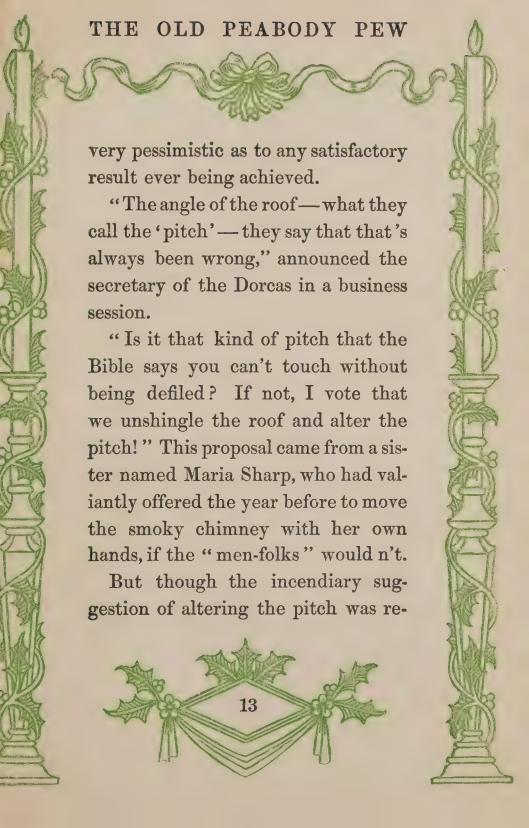


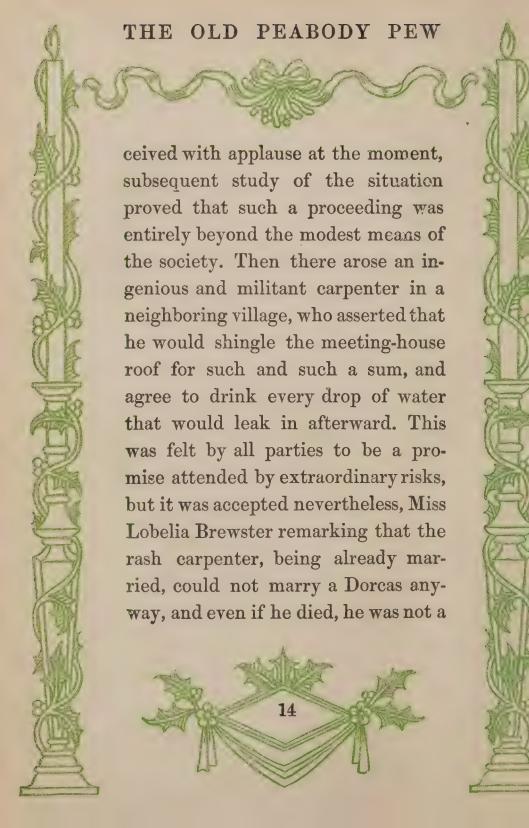


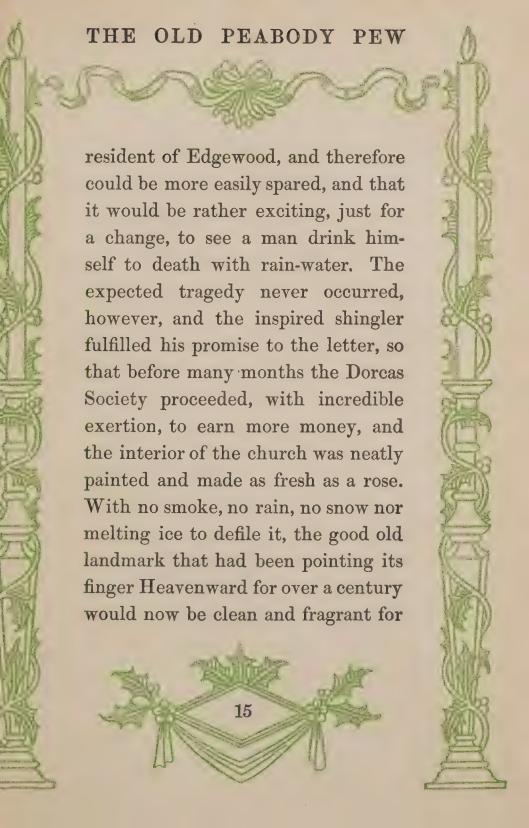


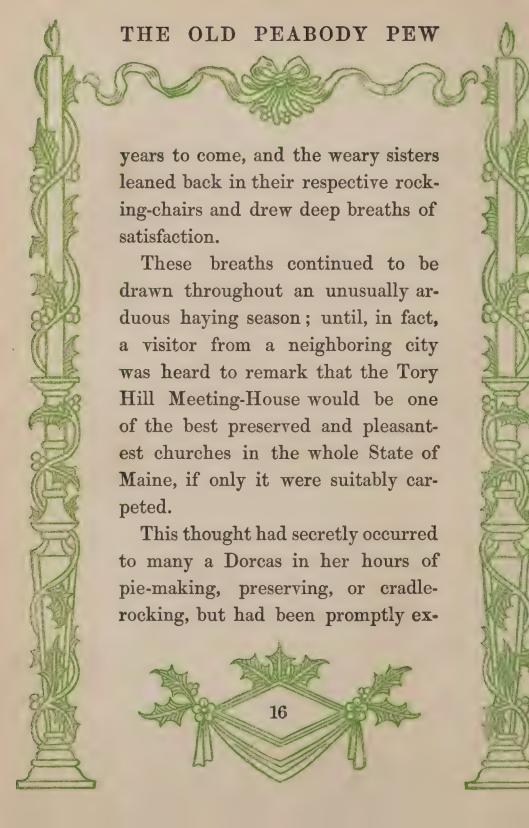


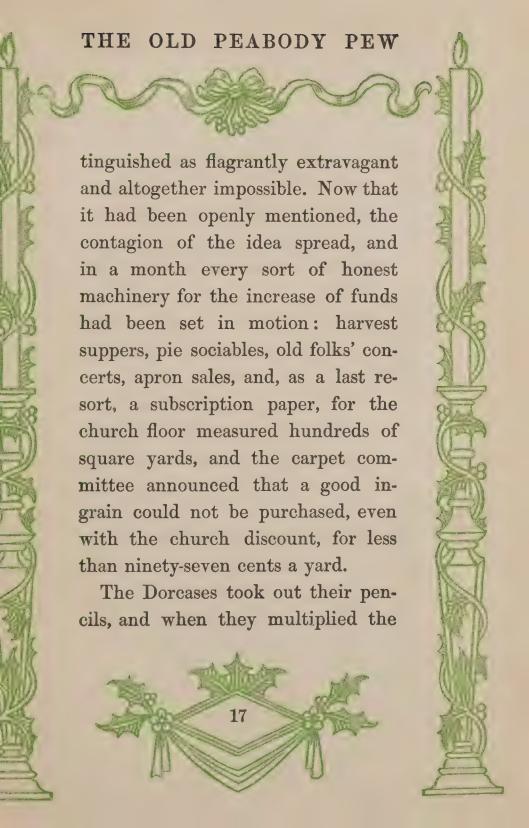


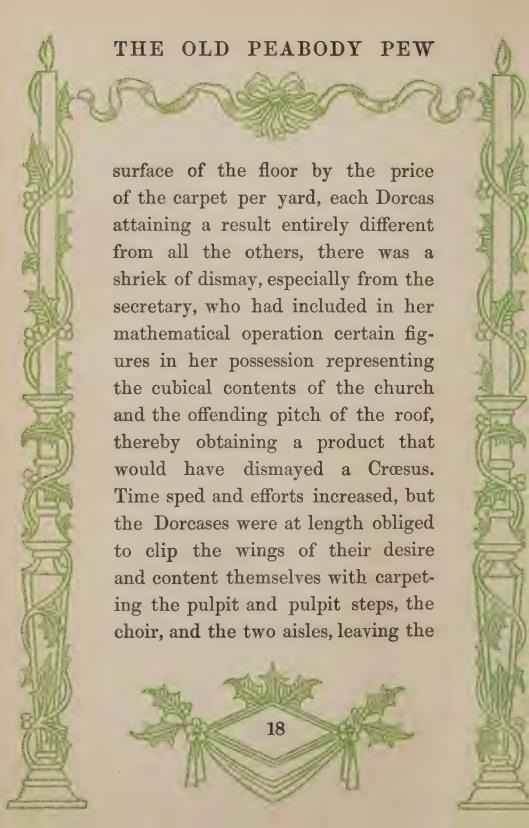


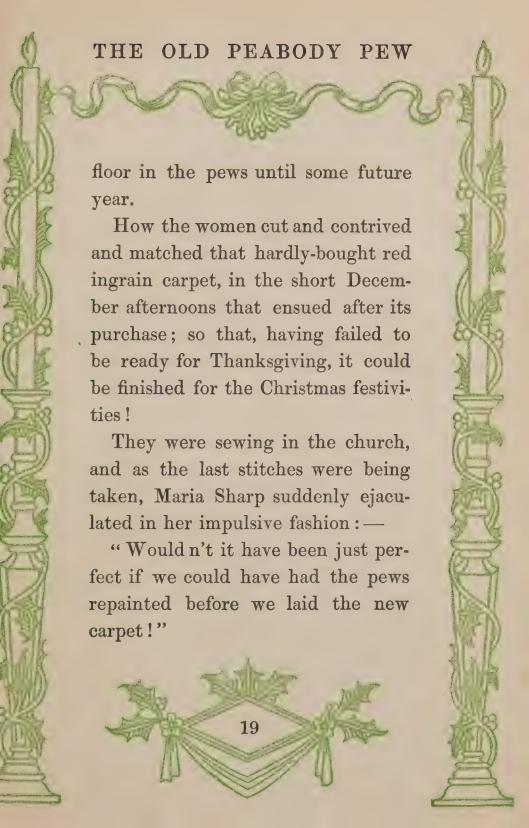


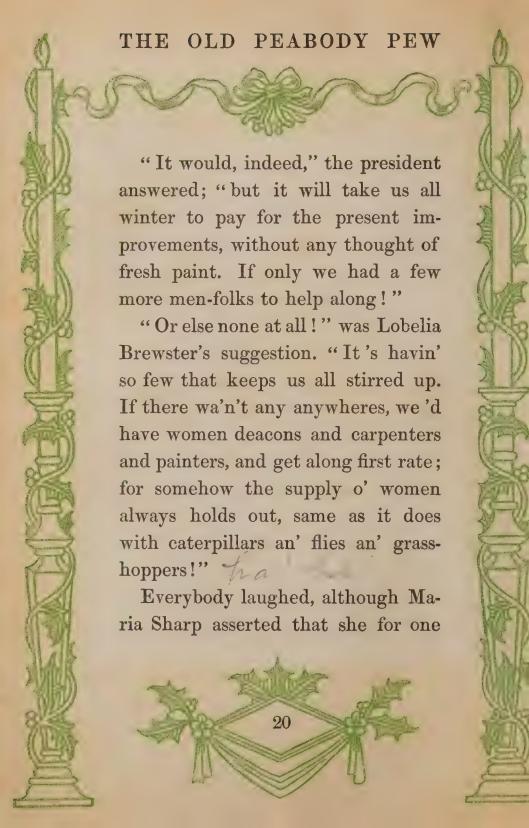


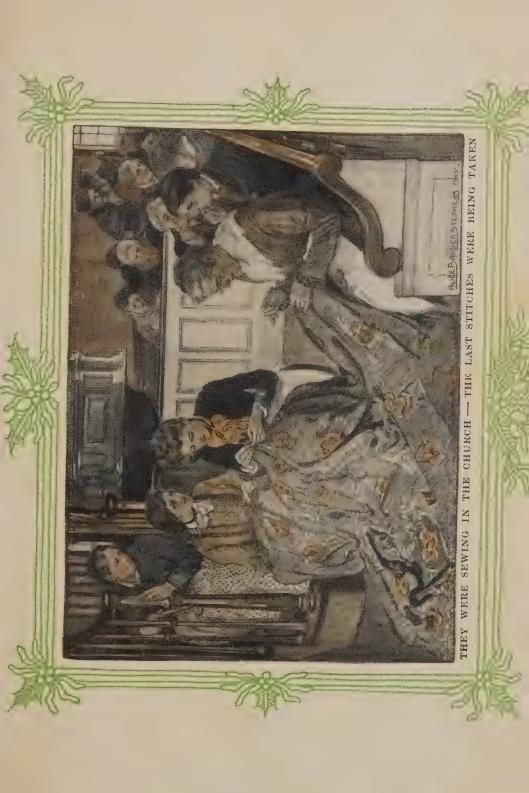




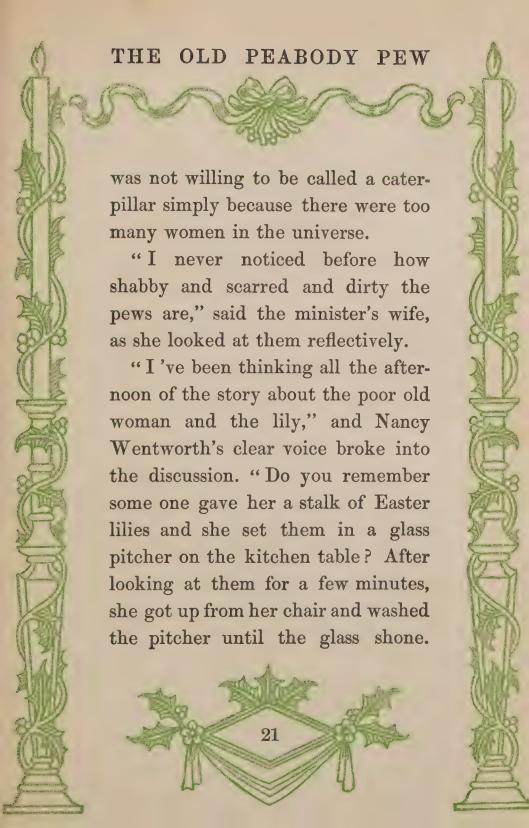


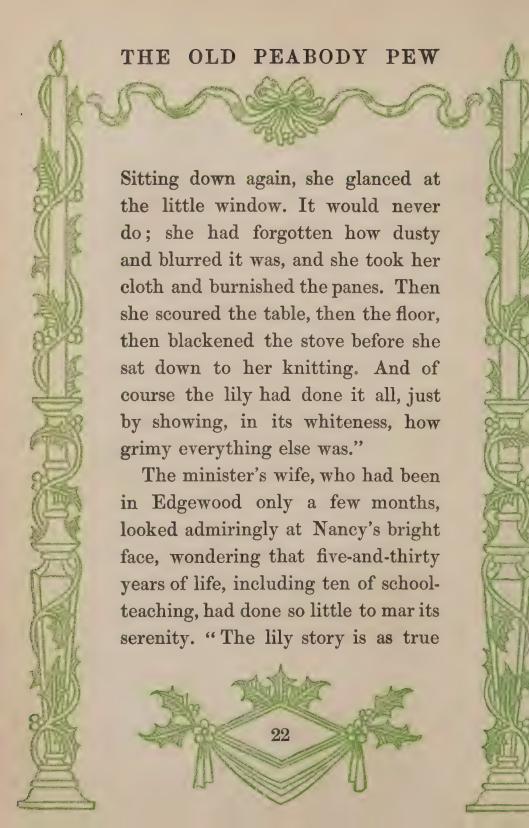


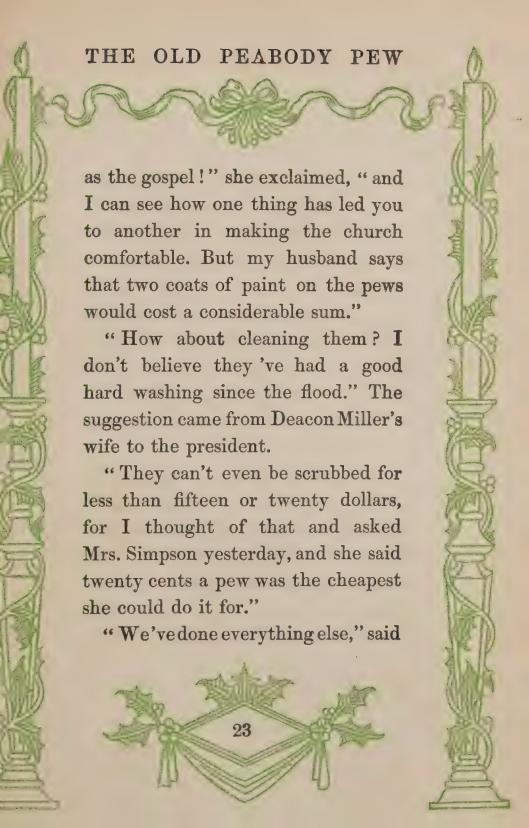


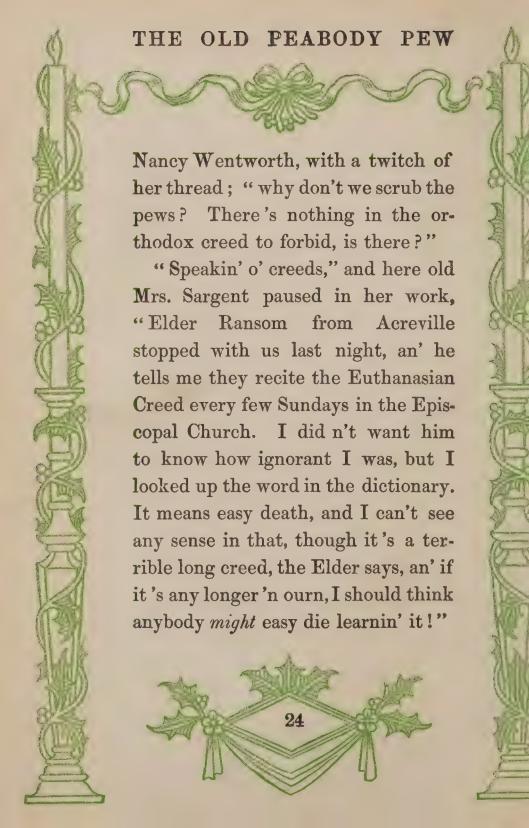


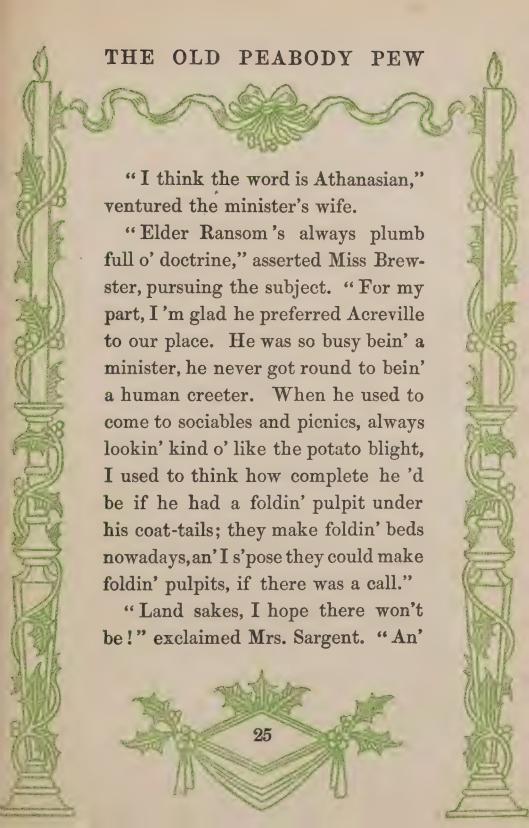


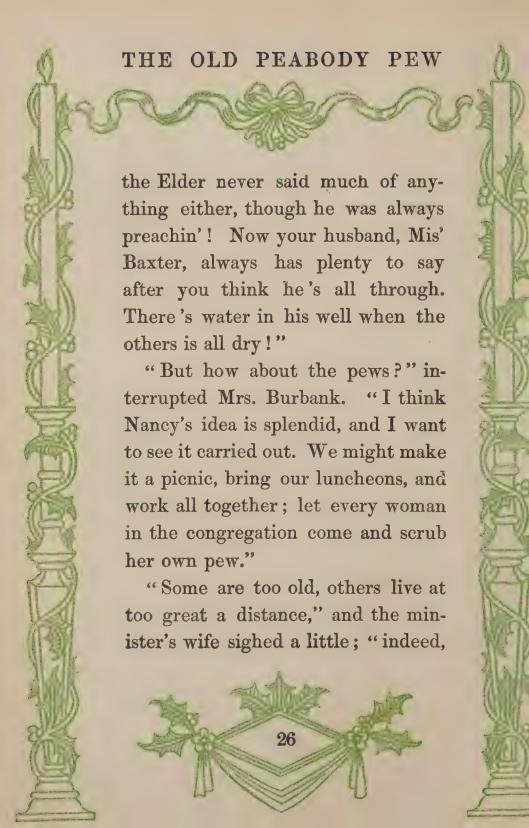


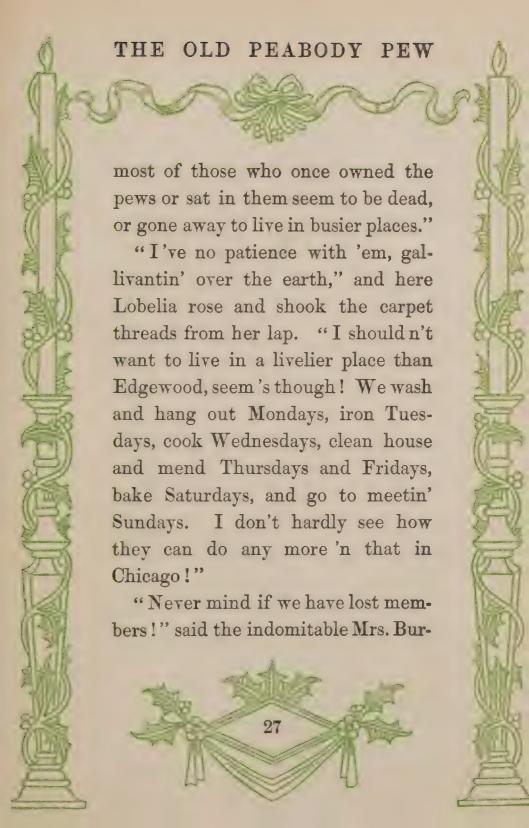


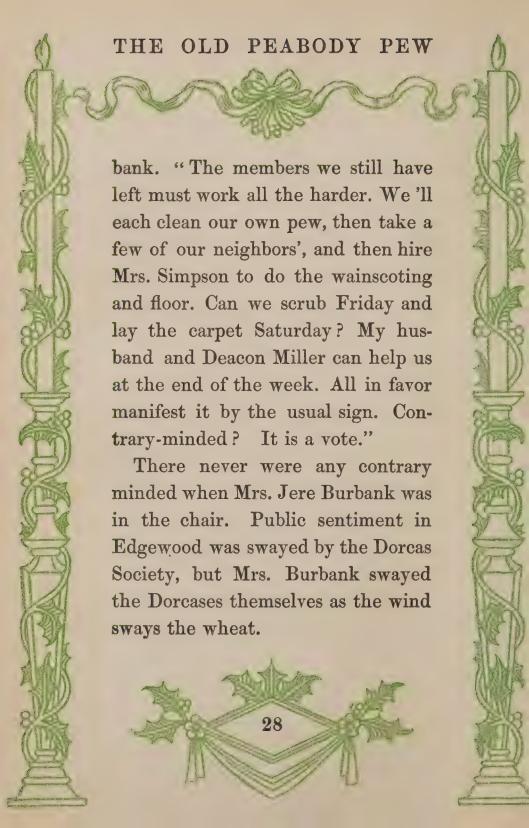




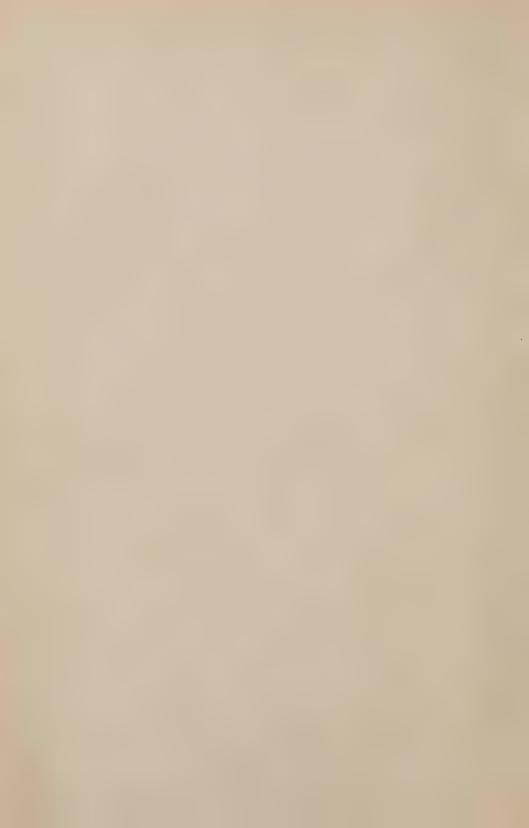


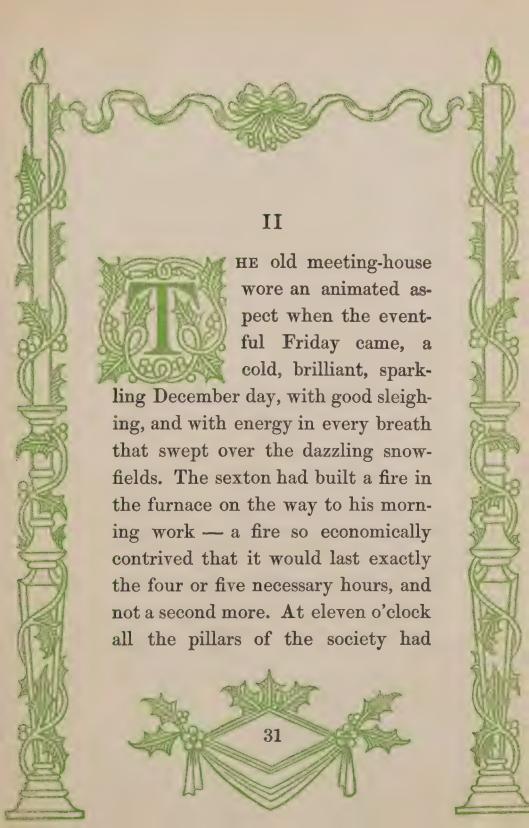


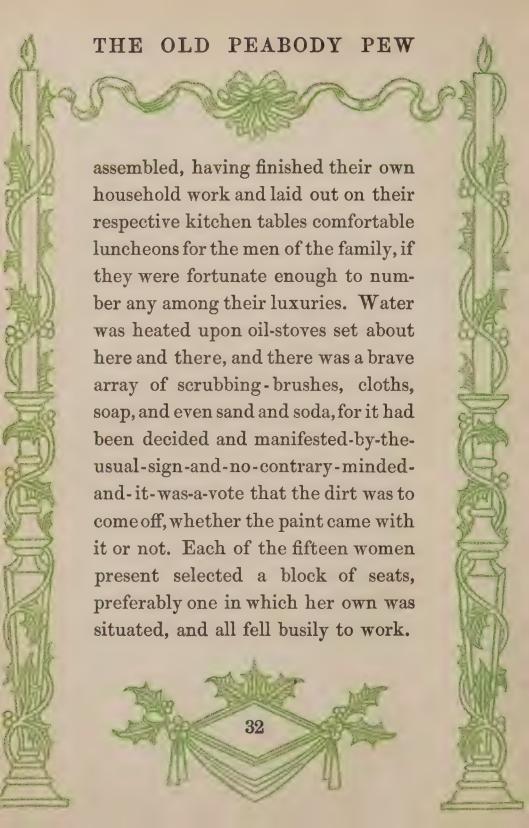


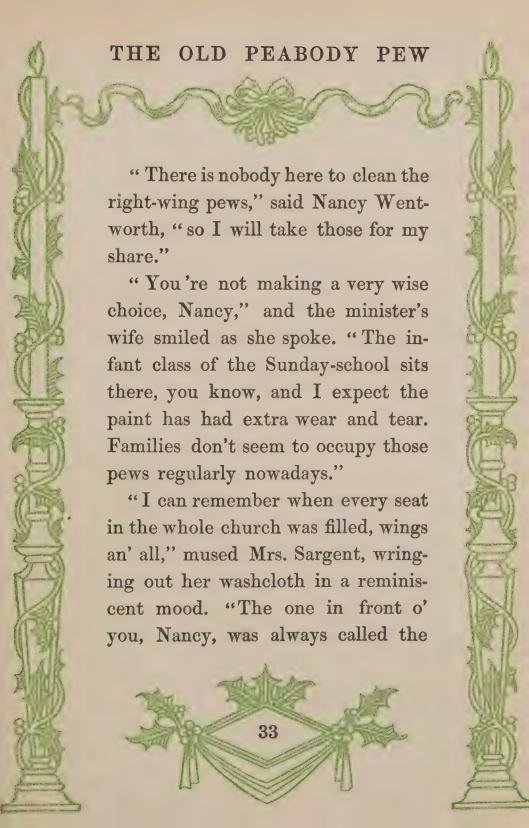


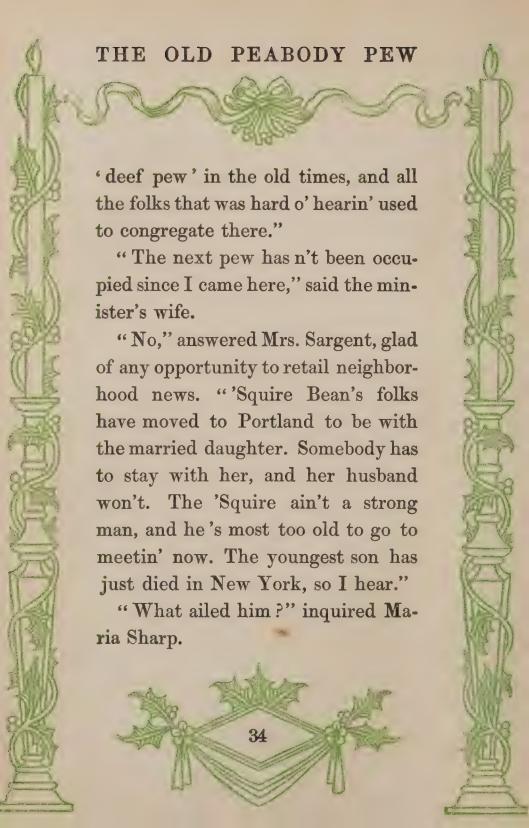


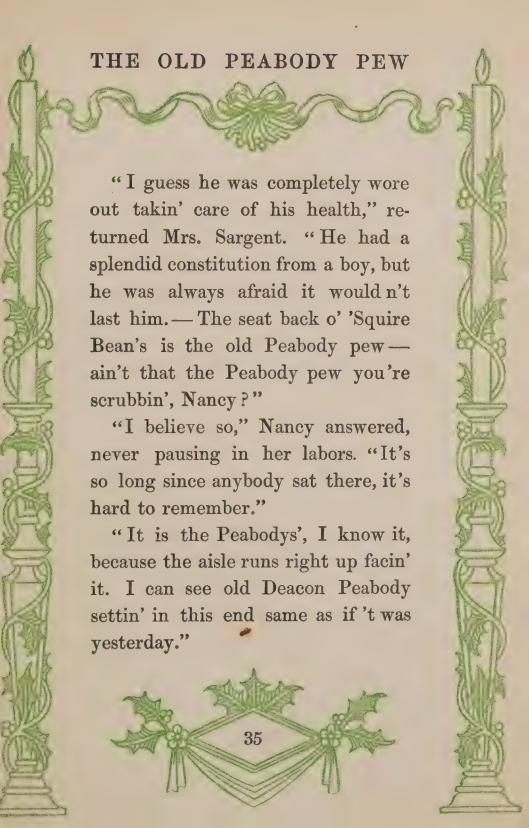








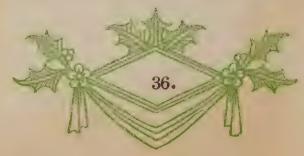


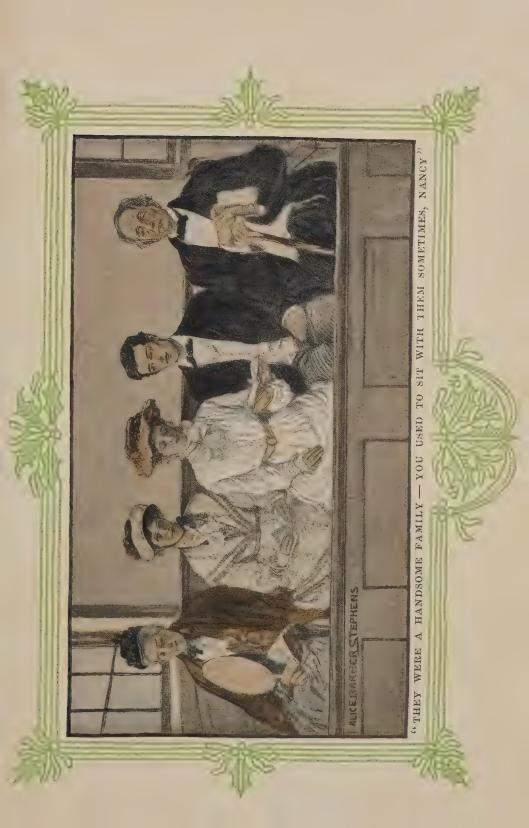


THE OLD PEABODY PEW

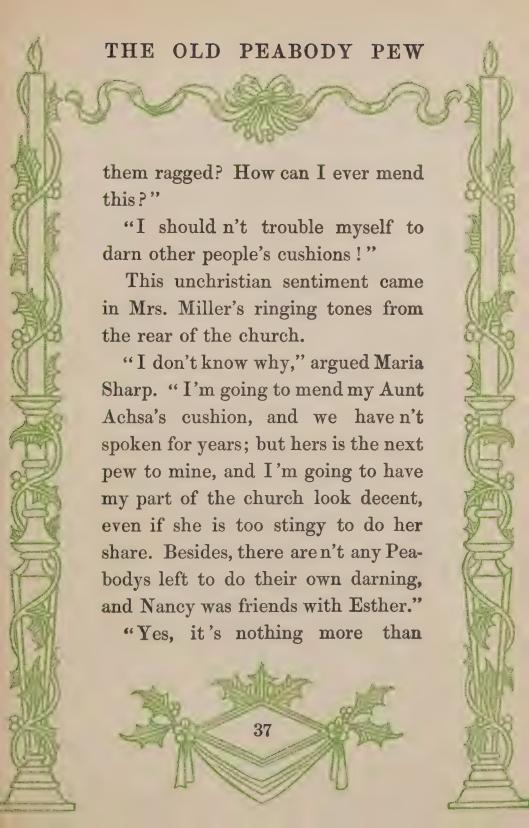
"He had died before Jere and I came back here to live," said Mrs. Burbank. "The first I remember, Justin Peabody sat in the end seat; the sister that died, next, and in the corner, against the wall, Mrs. Peabody, with a crêpe shawl and a palmleaf fan. They were a handsome family. You used to sit with them sometimes, Nancy; Esther was great friends with you."

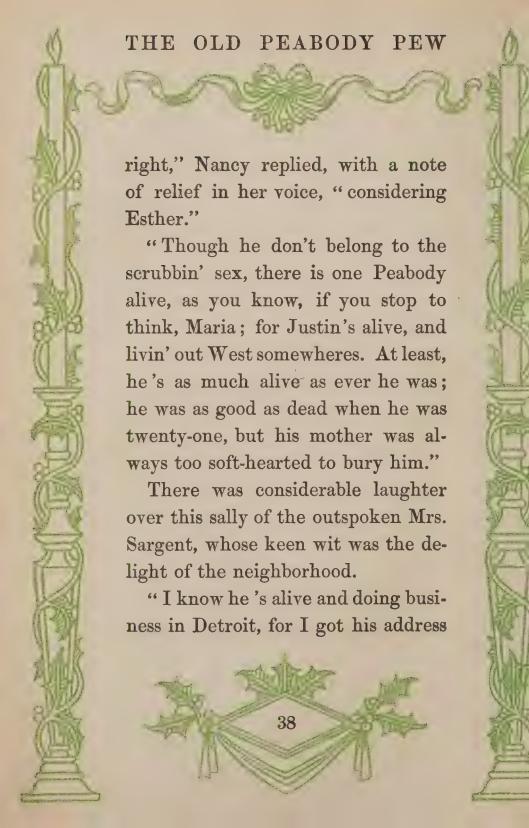
"Yes, she was," Nancy replied, lifting the tattered cushion from its place and brushing it; "and I with her.—What is the use of scrubbing and carpeting, when there are only twenty pew-cushions and six hassocks in the whole church, and most of

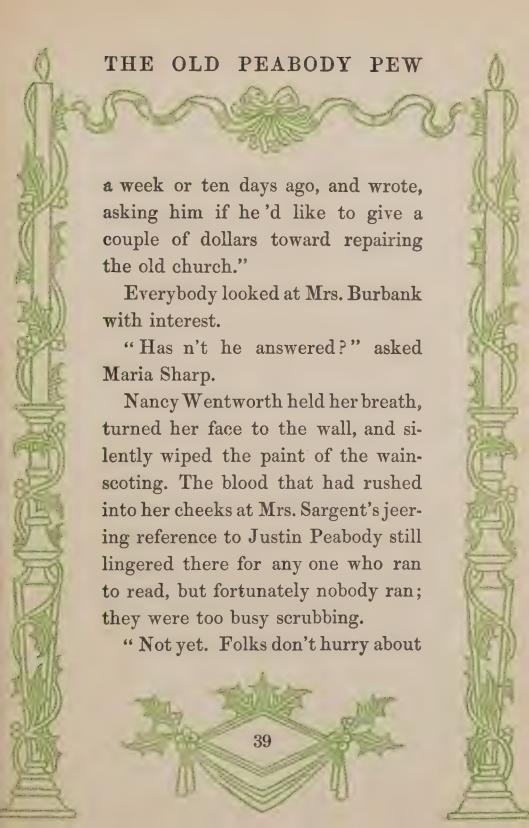


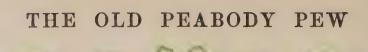






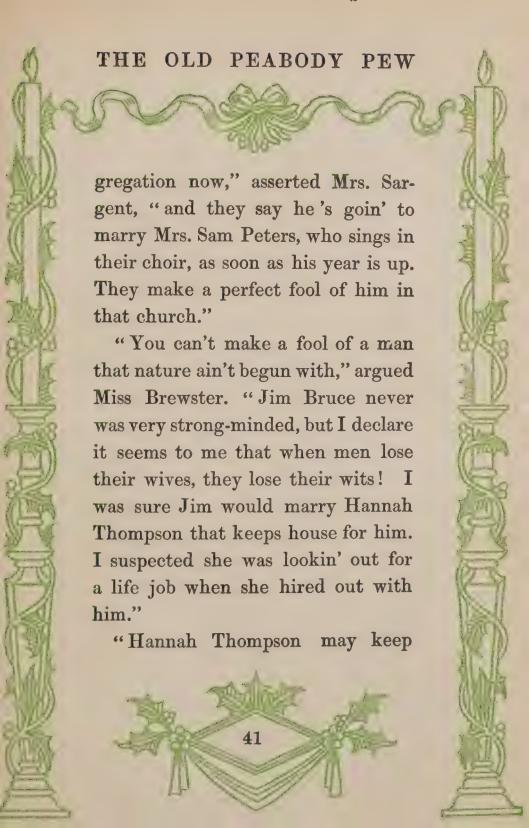


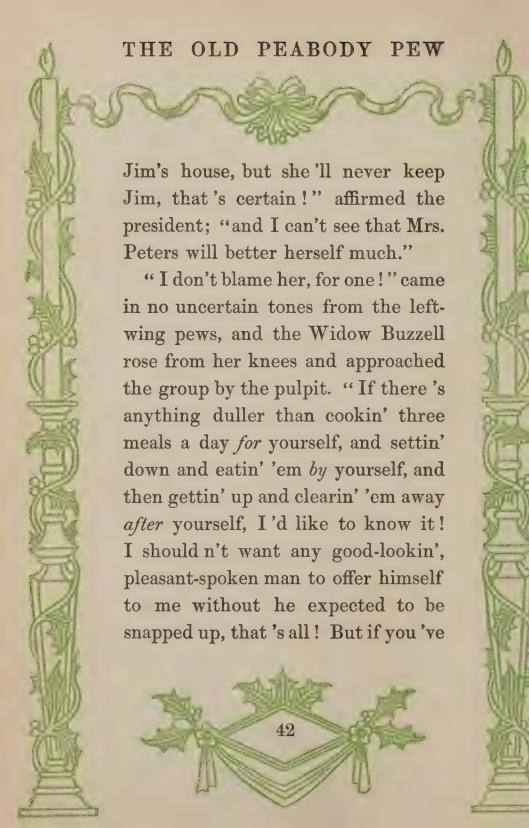


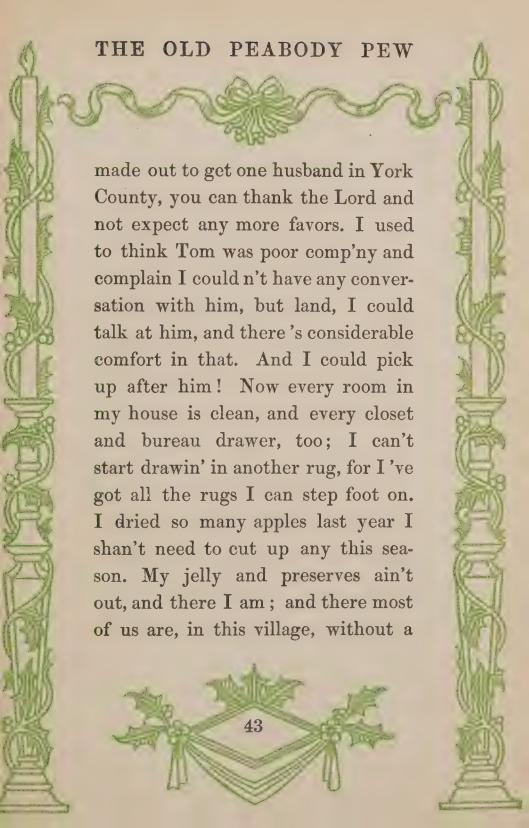


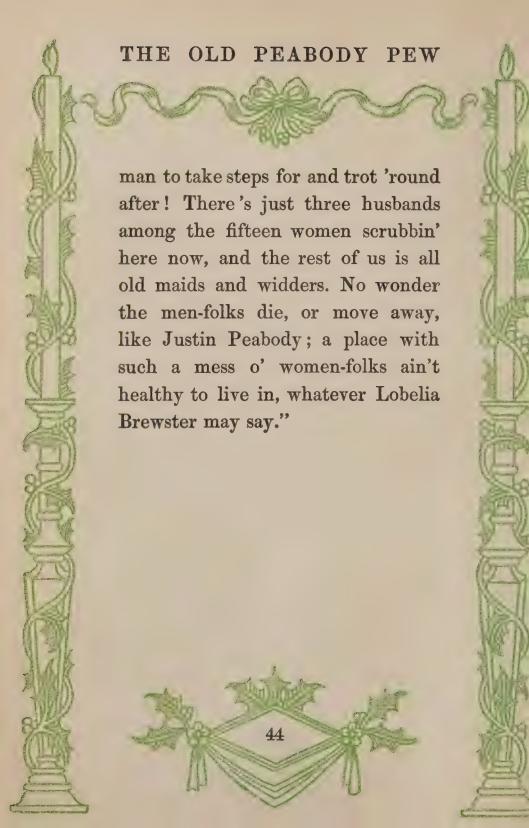
answering when you ask them for a contribution," replied the president, with a cynicism common to persons who collect funds for charitable purposes. "George Wickham sent me twenty-five cents from Denver. When I wrote him a receipt, I said thank you same as Aunt Polly did when the neighbors brought her a piece of beef: 'Ever so much obleeged, but don't forget me when you come to kill a pig.'- Now, Mrs. Baxter, you shan't clean James Bruce's pew, or what was his before he turned Second Advent. I'll do that myself, for he used to be in my Sunday-school class."

"He's the backbone o' that con-



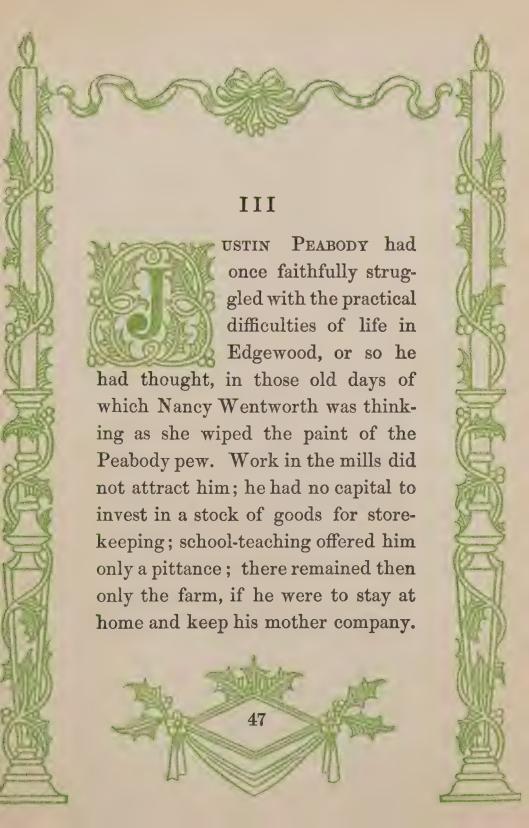


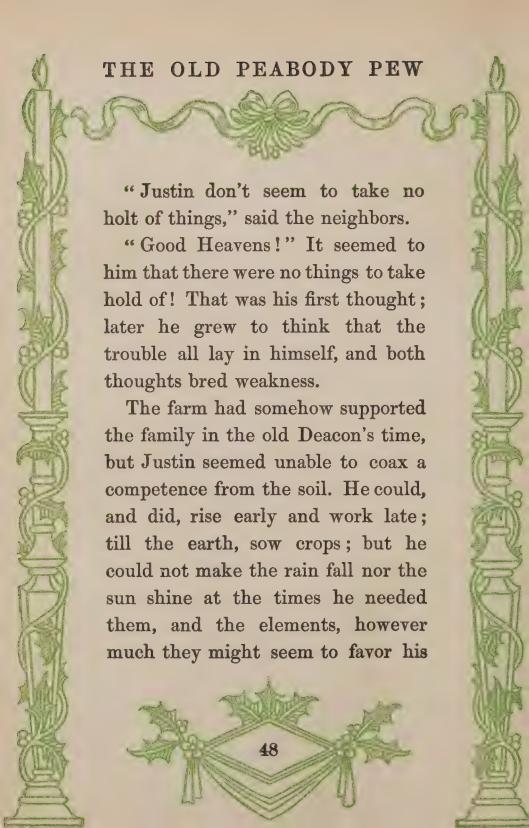


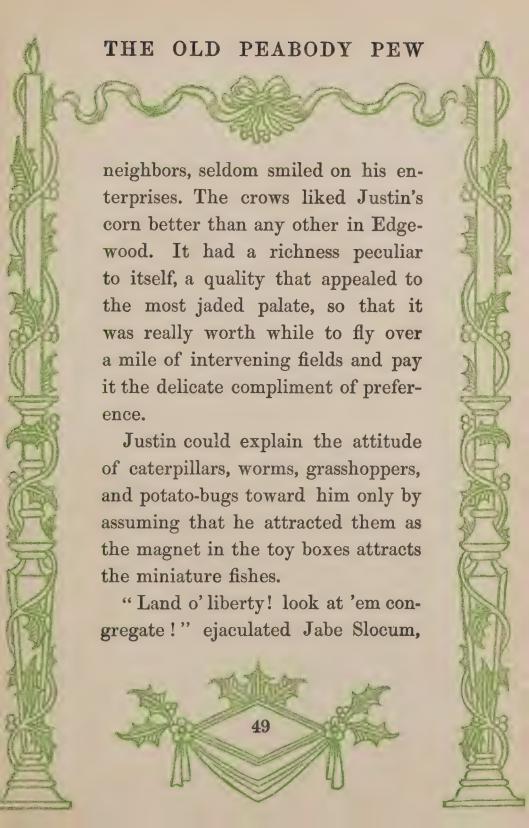


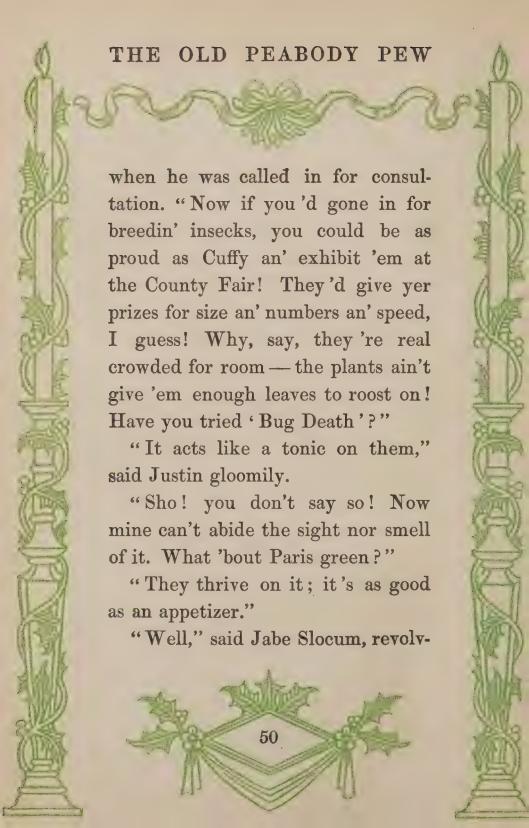


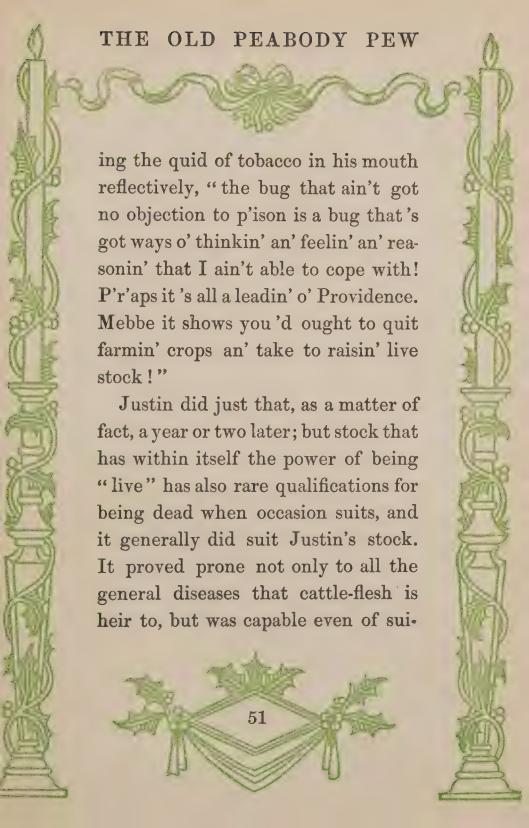


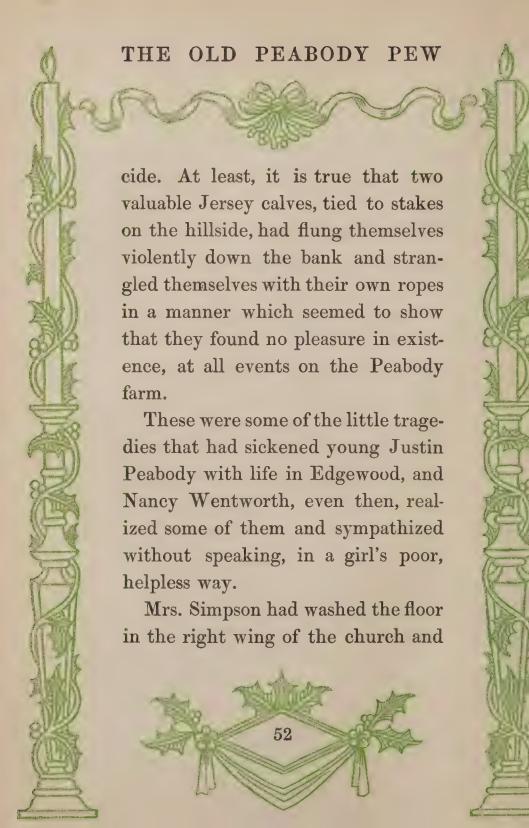


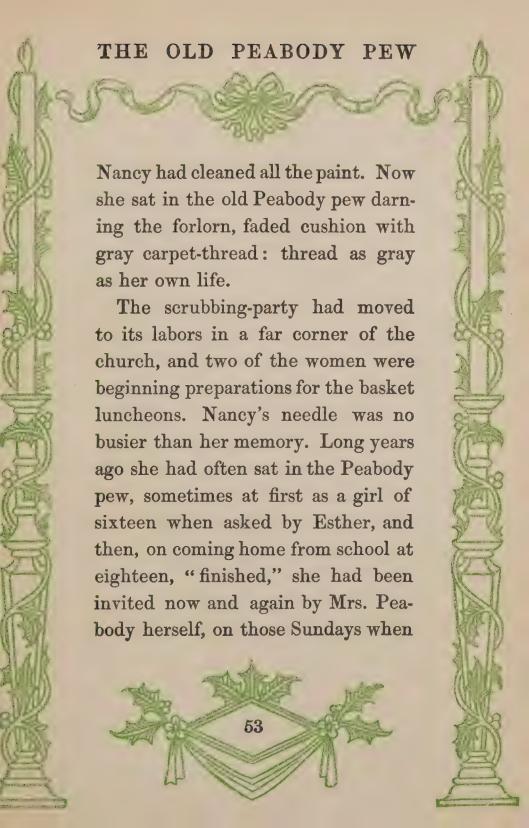


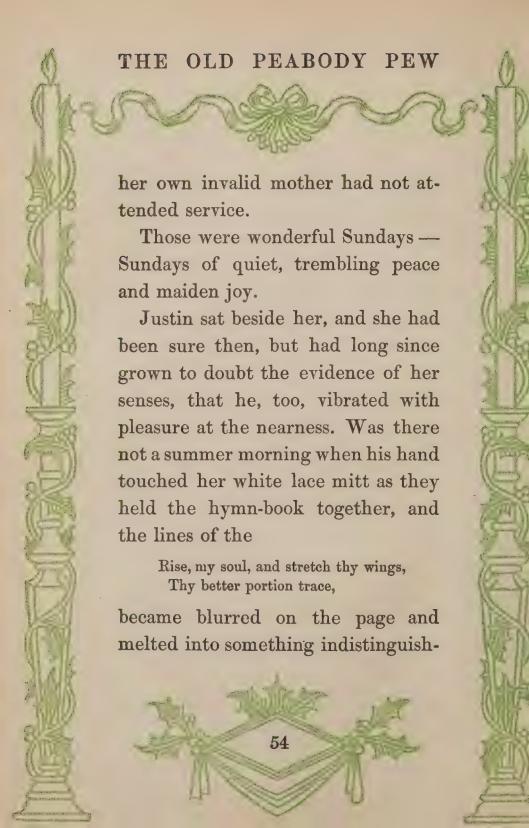


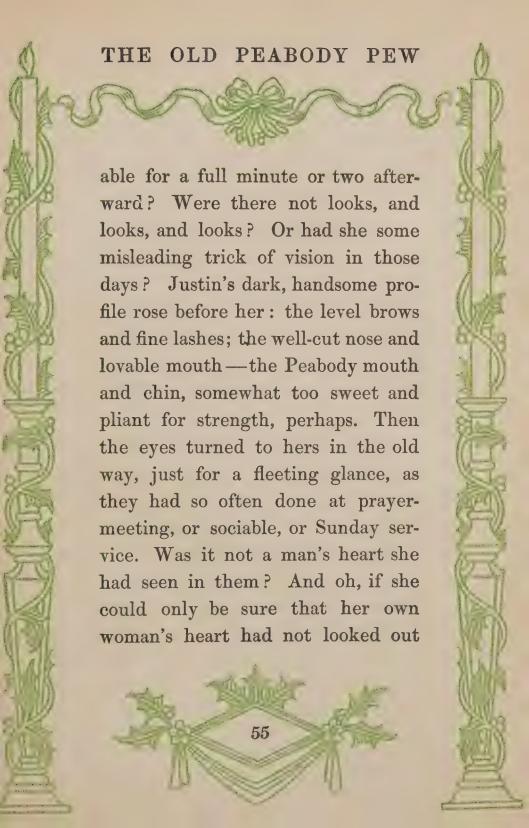


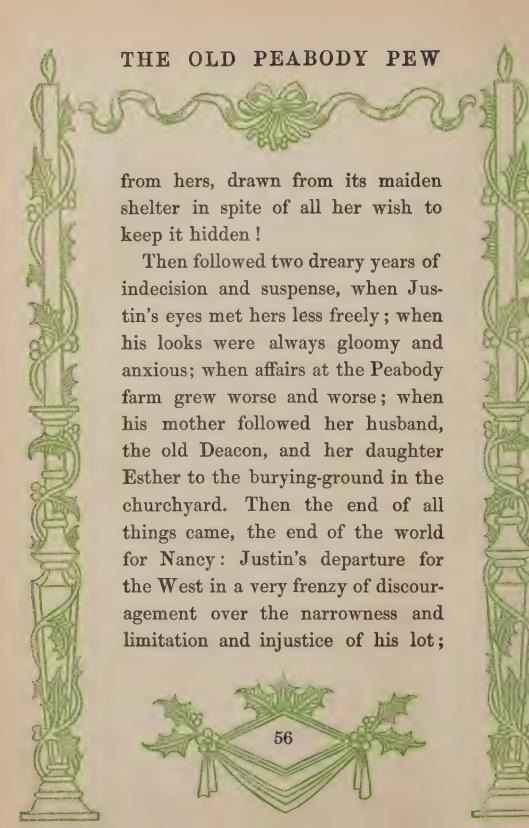


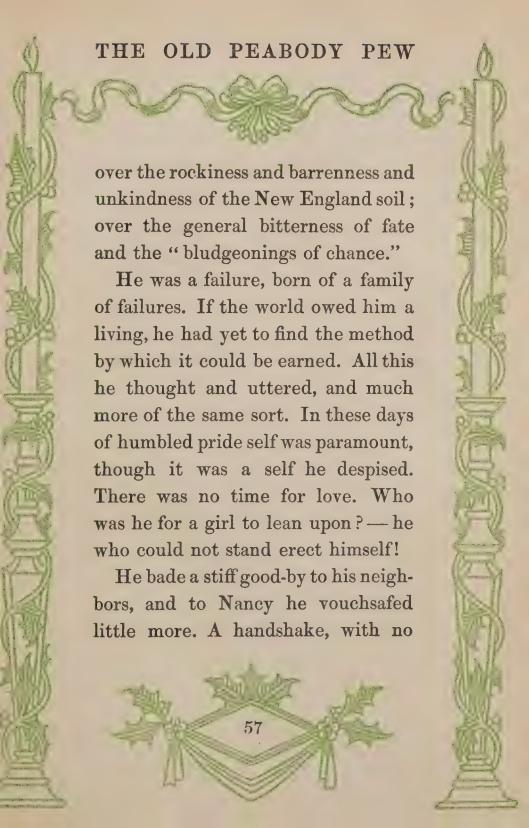


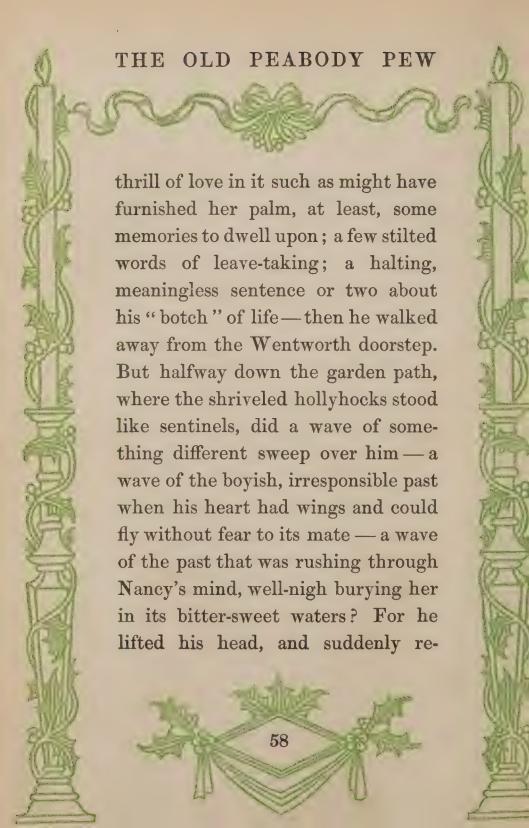


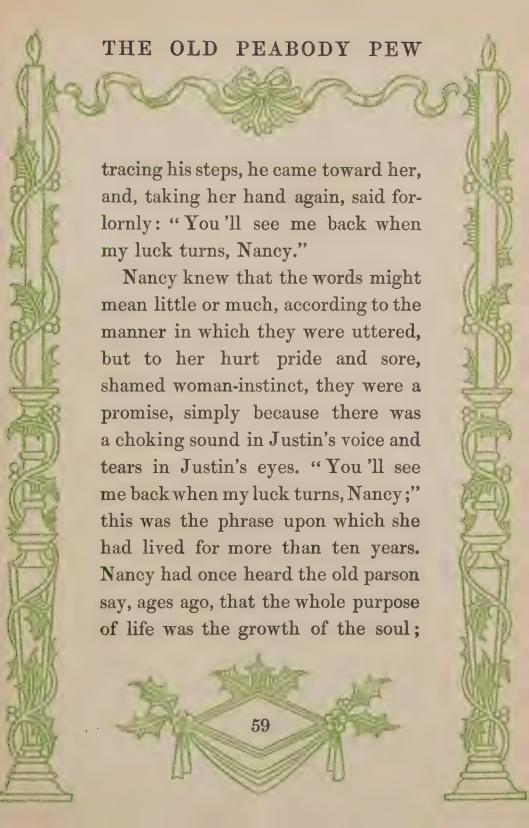


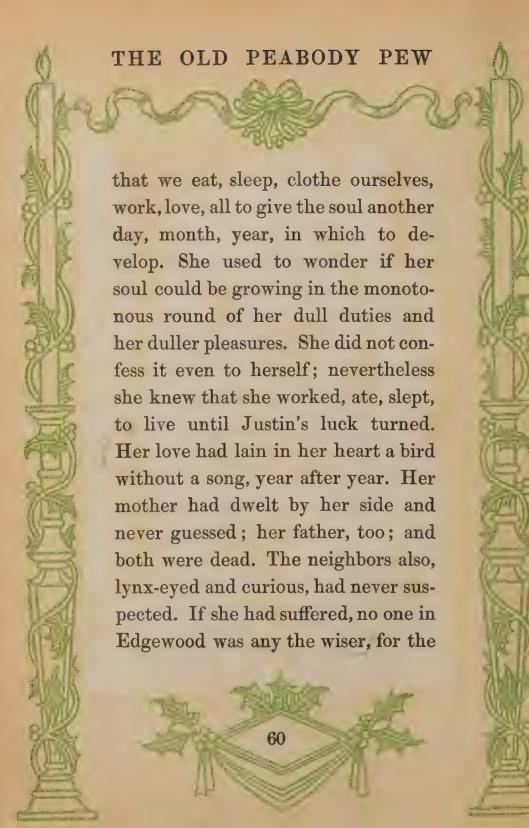


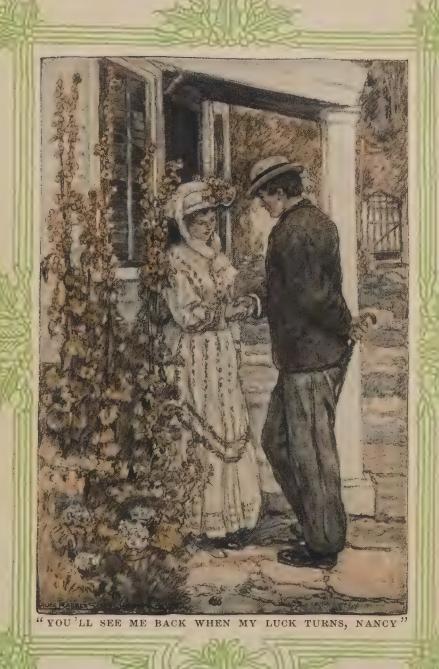




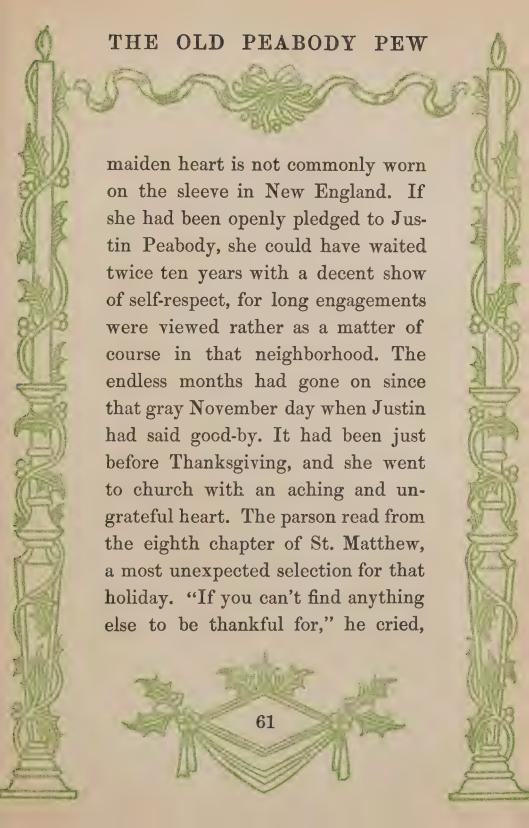


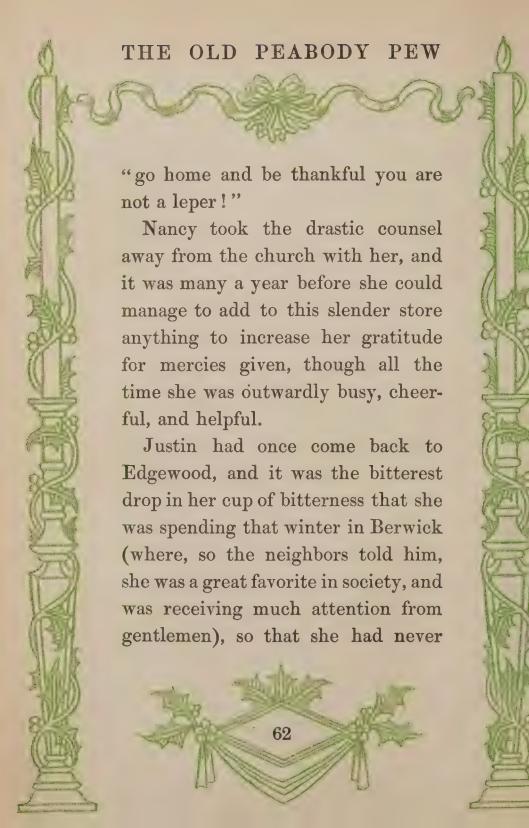


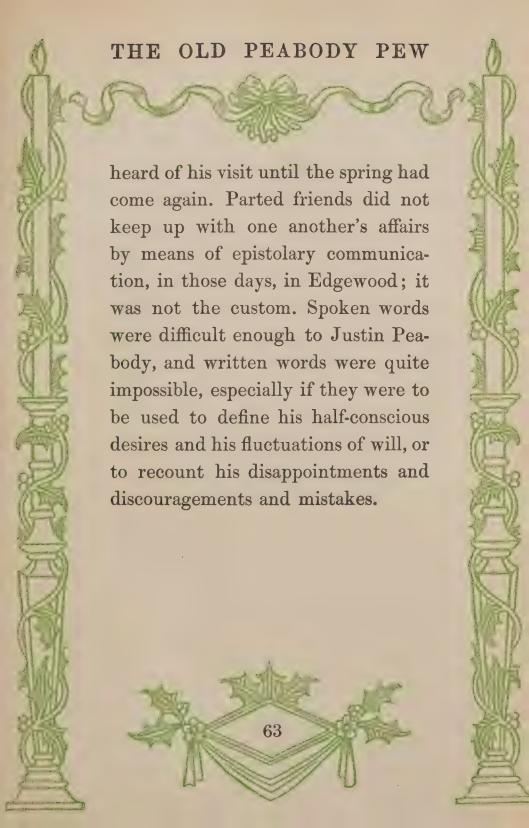




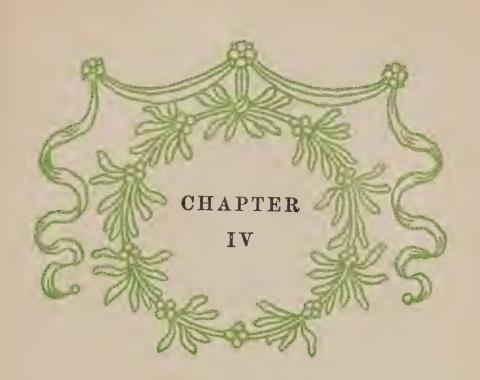




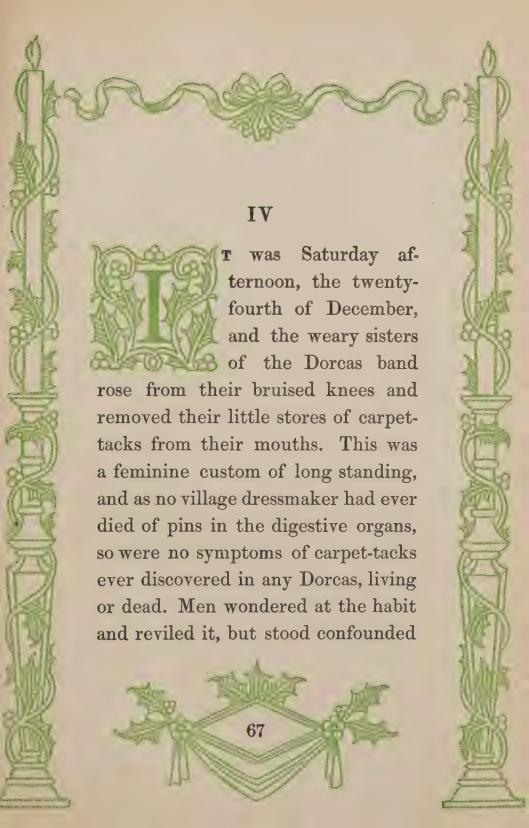


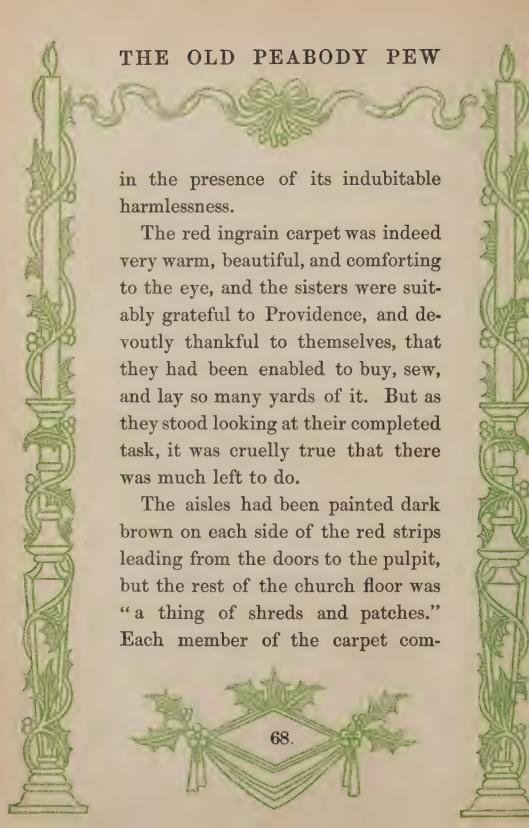


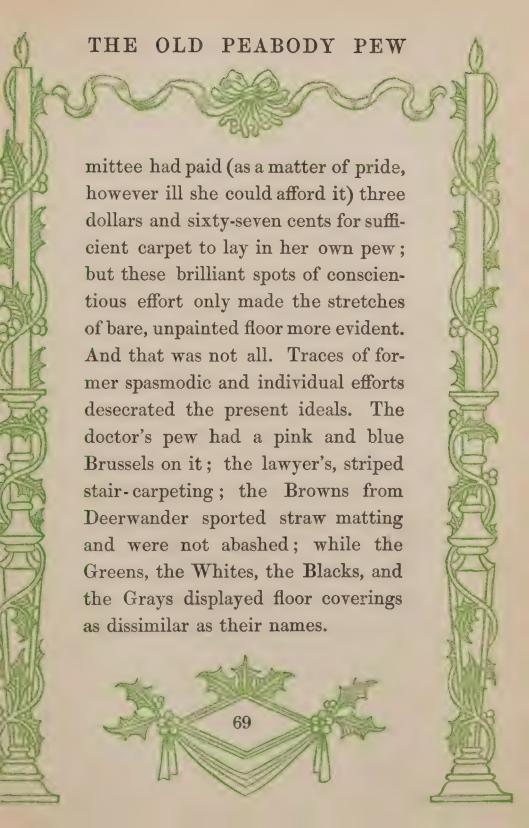


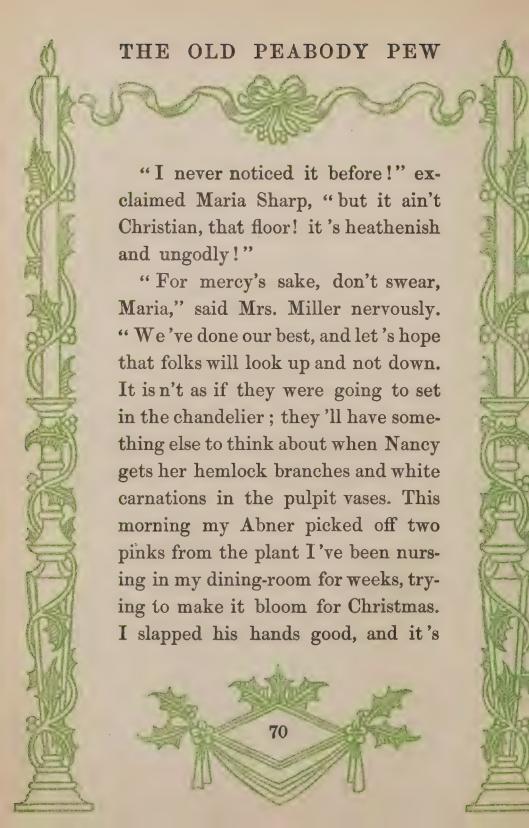


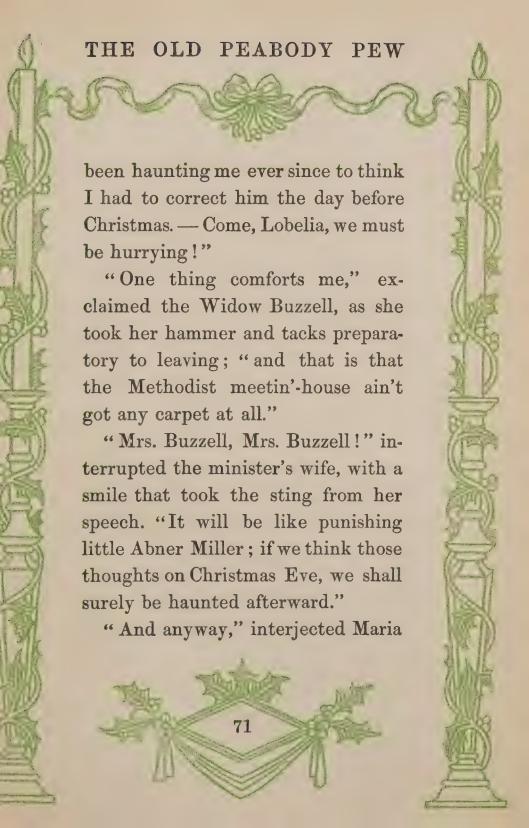


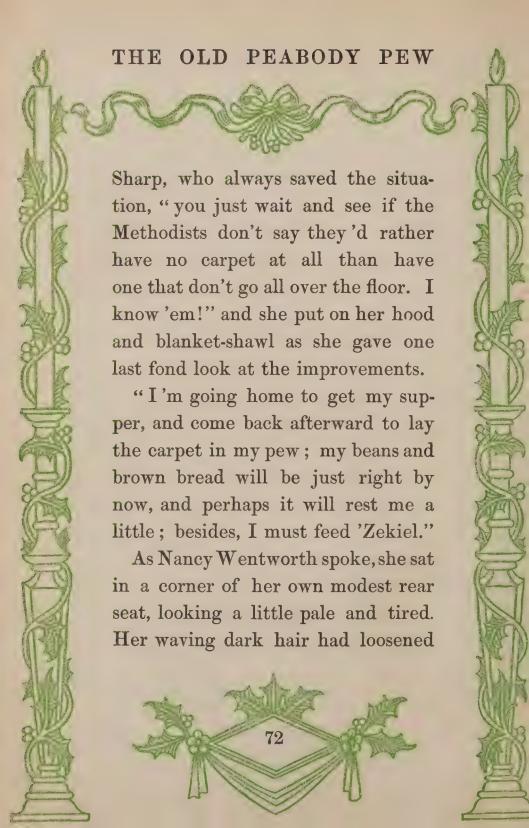


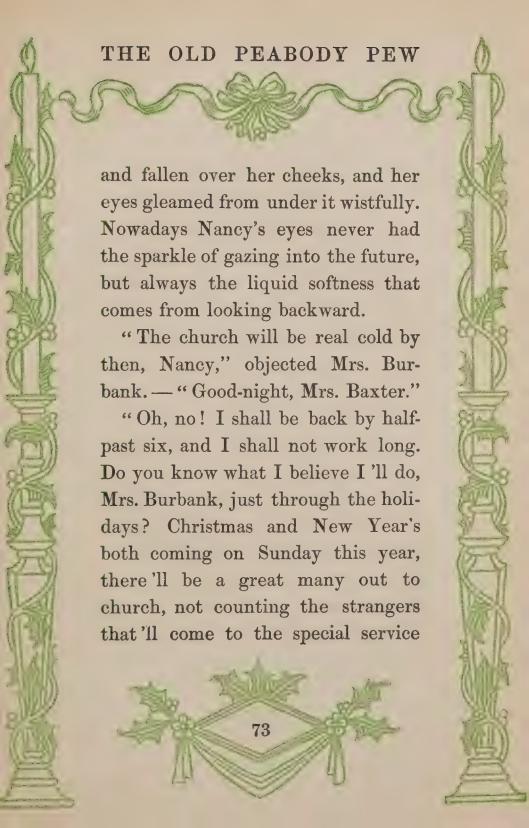


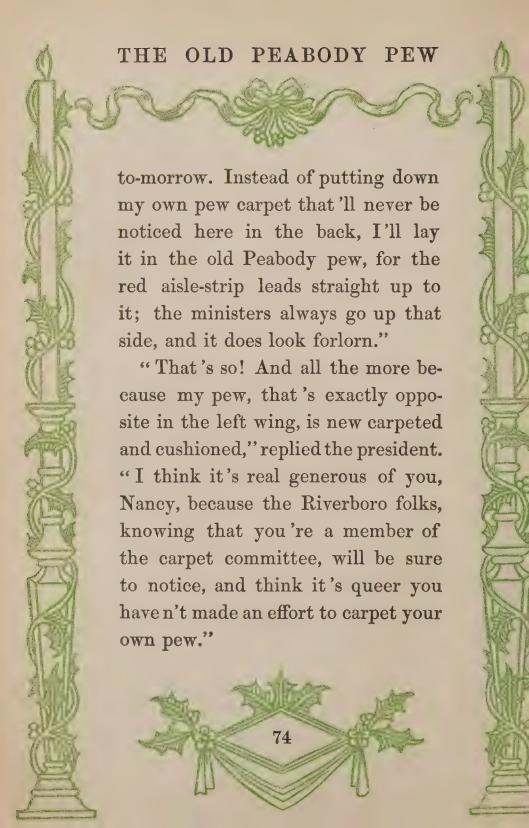


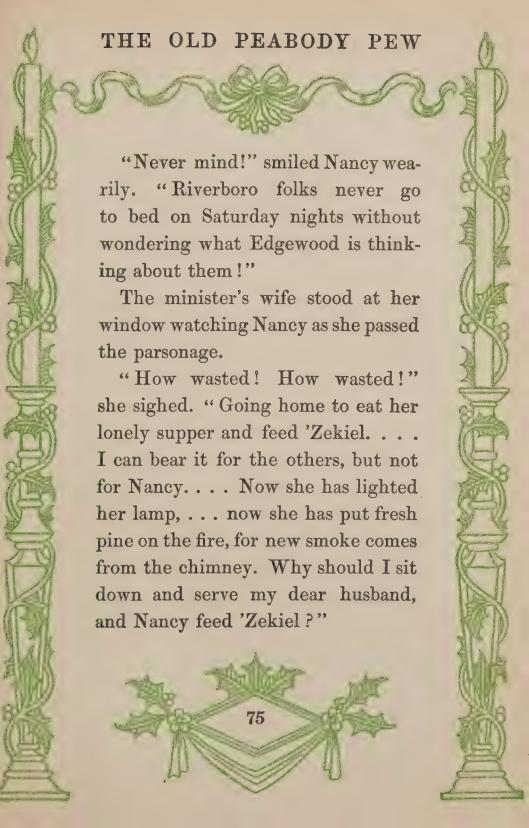


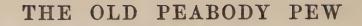






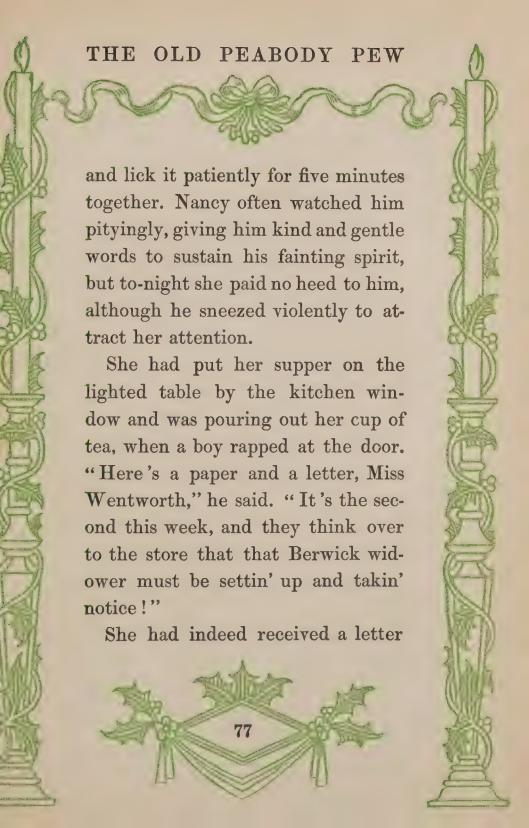


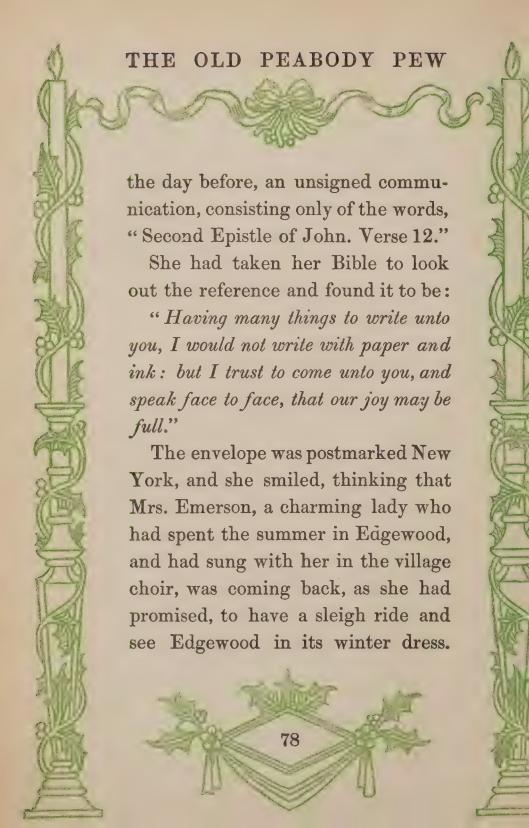


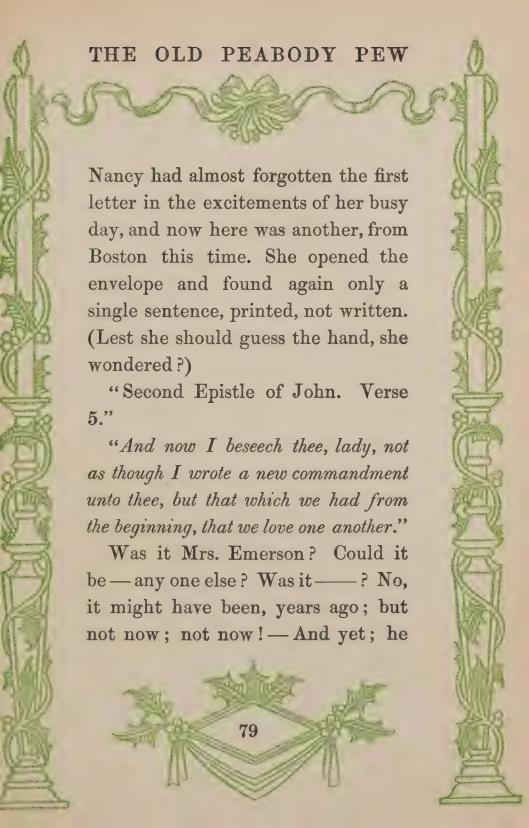


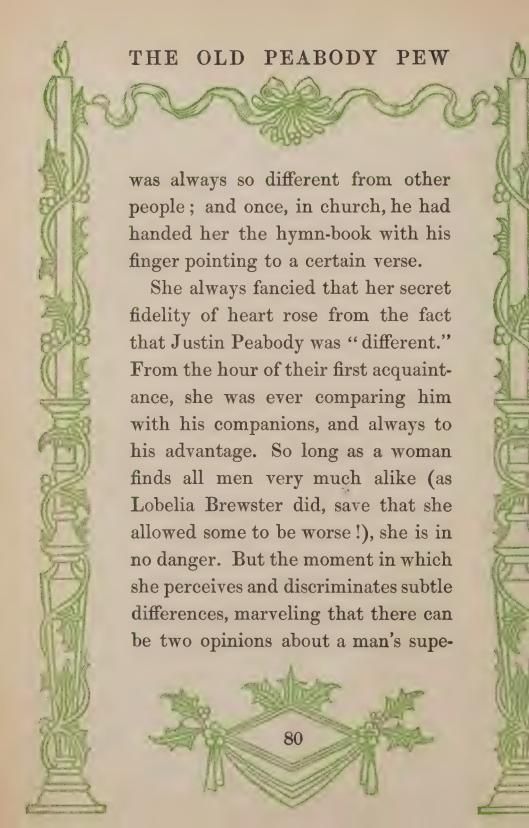
There was some truth in Mrs. Baxter's feeling. Mrs. Buzzell, for instance, had three sons; Maria Sharp was absorbed in her lame father and her Sunday-school work; and Lobelia Brewster would not have considered matrimony a blessing, even under the most favorable conditions. But Nancy was framed and planned for other things, and 'Zekiel was an insufficient channel for her soft, womanly sympathy and her bright activity of mind and body.

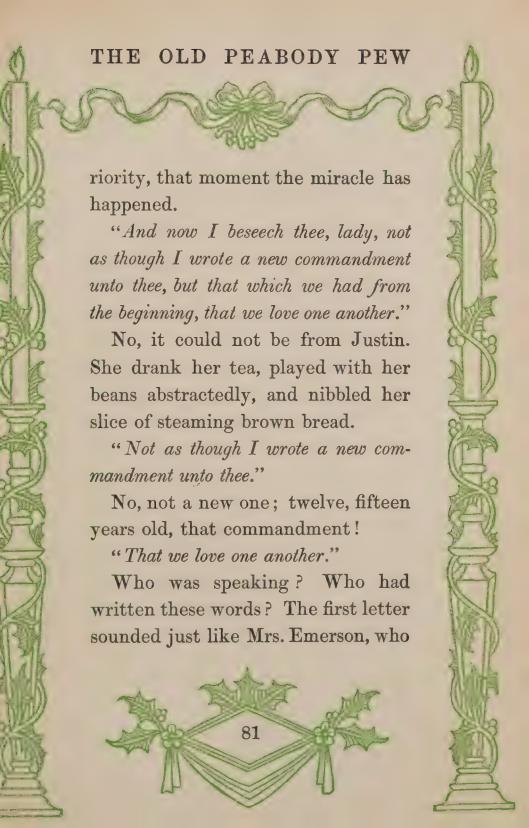
'Zekiel had lost his tail in a mowing-machine; 'Zekiel had the asthma, and the immersion of his nose in milk made him sneeze, so he was wont to slip his paw in and out of the dish

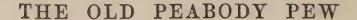








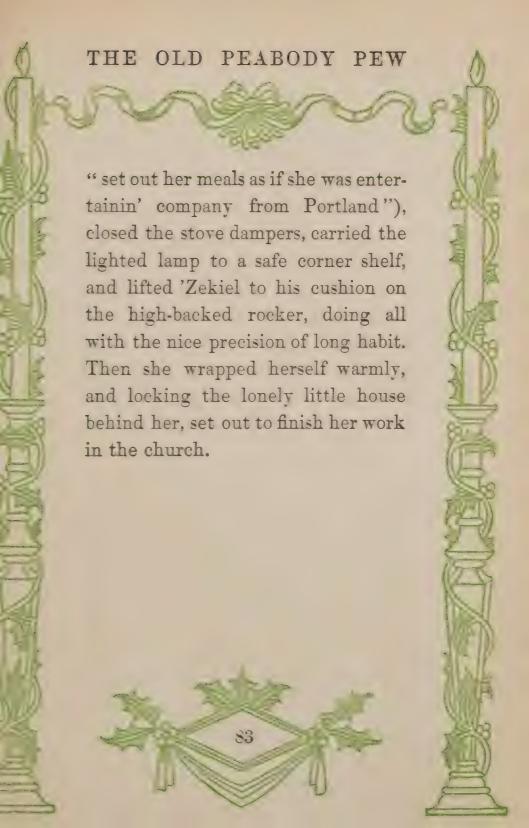




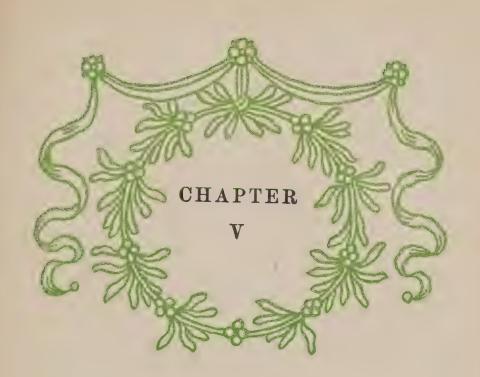
had said she was a very poor correspondent, but that she should just "drop down" on Nancy one of these days; but this second letter never came from Mrs. Emerson. — Well, there would be an explanation some time; a pleasant one; one to smile over, and tell 'Zekiel and repeat to the neighbors; but not an unexpected, sacred, beautiful explanation, such a one as the heart of a woman could imagine, if she were young enough and happy enough to hope.

She washed her cup and plate; replaced the uneaten beans in the brown pot, and put them away with the round loaf, folded the cloth (Lobelia Brewster said Nancy always)

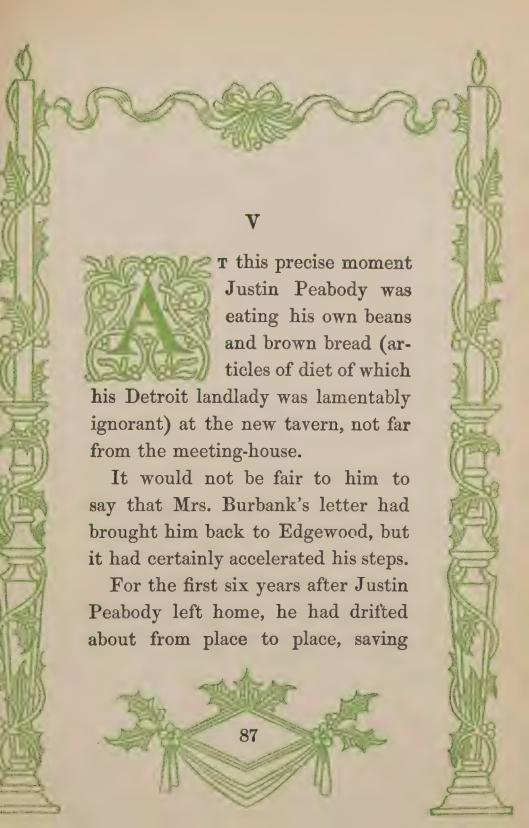










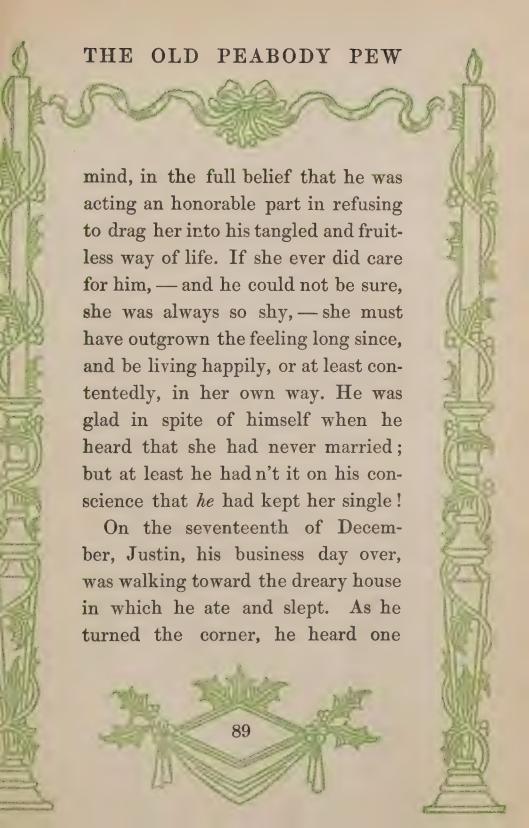




every possible dollar of his uncertain earnings in the conscious hope that he could go back to New England and ask Nancy Wentworth to marry him. The West was prosperous and progressive, but how he yearned, in idle moments, for the grimmer and more sterile soil that had given him birth!

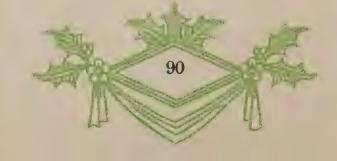
Then came what seemed to him a brilliant chance for a lucky turn of his savings, and he invested them in an enterprise which, wonderfully as it promised, failed within six months and left him penniless. At that moment he definitely gave up all hope, and for the next few years he put Nancy as far as possible out of his

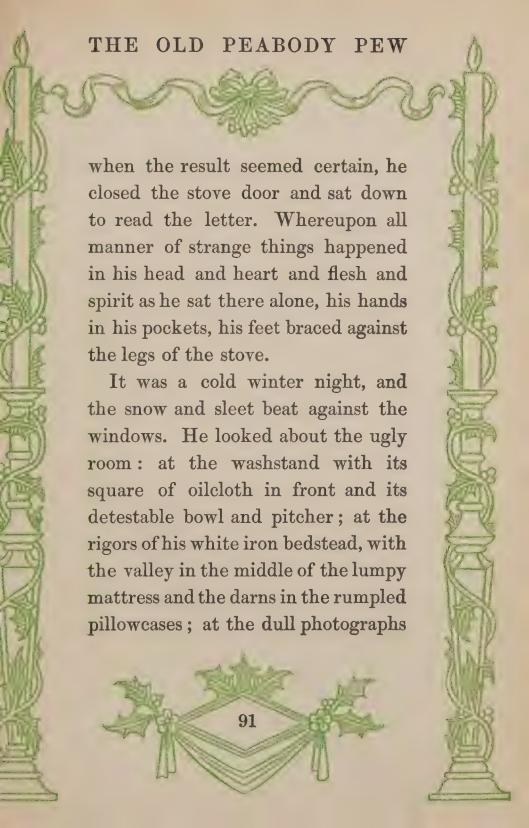




THE OLD PEABODY PEW

woman say to another, as they watched a man stumbling sorrowfully down the street: "Going home will be the worst of all for him — to find nobody there!" That was what going home had meant for him these ten years, but he afterward felt it strange that this thought should have struck him so forcibly on that particular day. Entering the boarding-house, he found Mrs. Burbank's letter with its Edgewood postmark on the hall table, and took it up to his room. He kindled a little fire in the air-tight stove, watching the flame creep from shavings to kindlings, from kindlings to small pine, and from small pine to the round, hardwood sticks; then

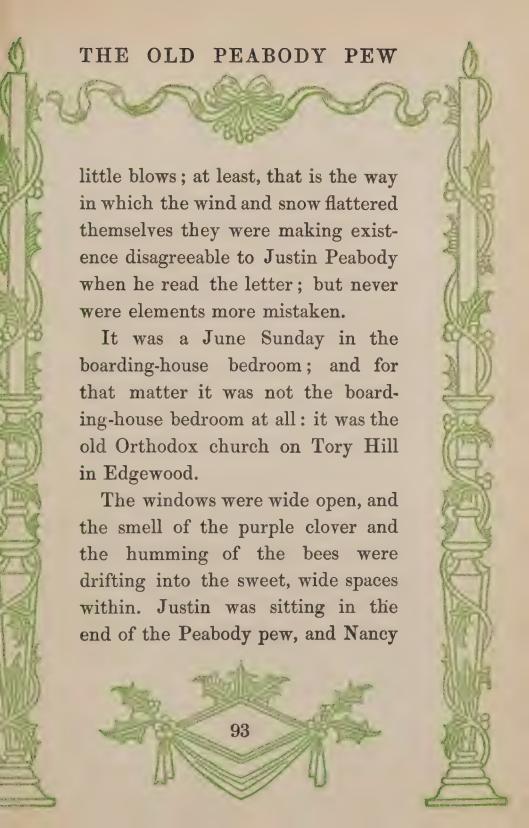


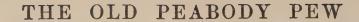




of the landlady's hideous husband and children enshrined on the mantel-shelf; looked at the abomination of desolation surrounding him until his soul sickened and cried out like a child's for something more like home. It was as if a spring thaw had melted his ice-bound heart, and on the crest of a wave it was drifting out into the milder waters of some unknown sea. He could have laid his head in the kind lap of a woman and cried: "Comfort me! Give me companion-ship or I die!"

The wind howled in the chimney and rattled the loose window-sashes; the snow, freezing as it fell, dashed against the glass with hard, cutting

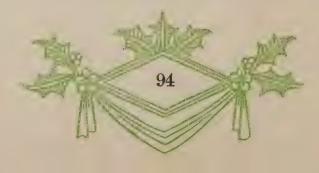


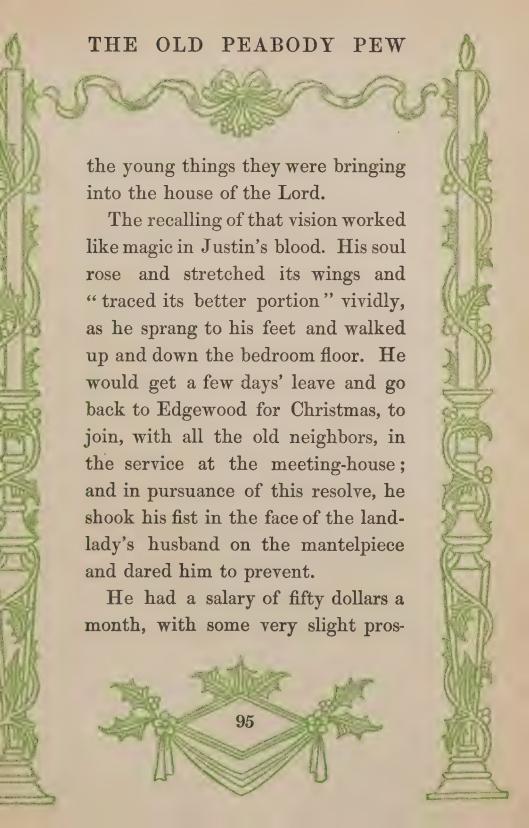


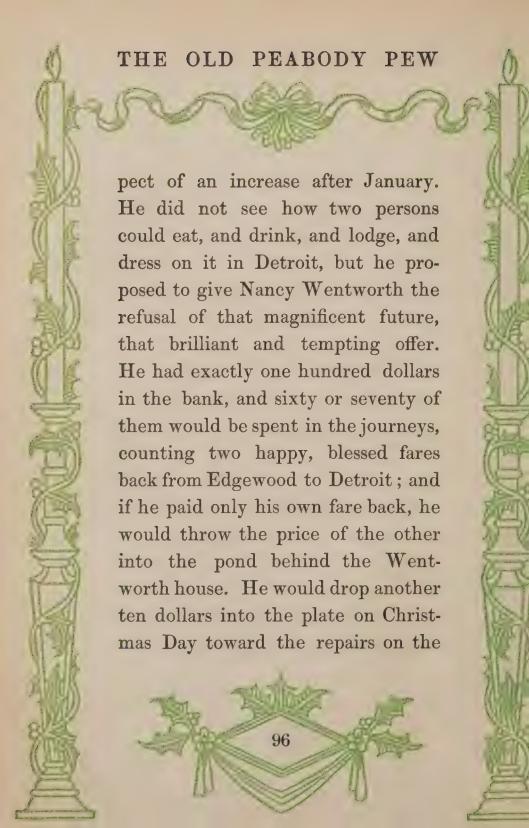
Wentworth was beside him; Nancy, cool and restful in her white dress; dark-haired Nancy under the shadow of her shirred muslin hat.

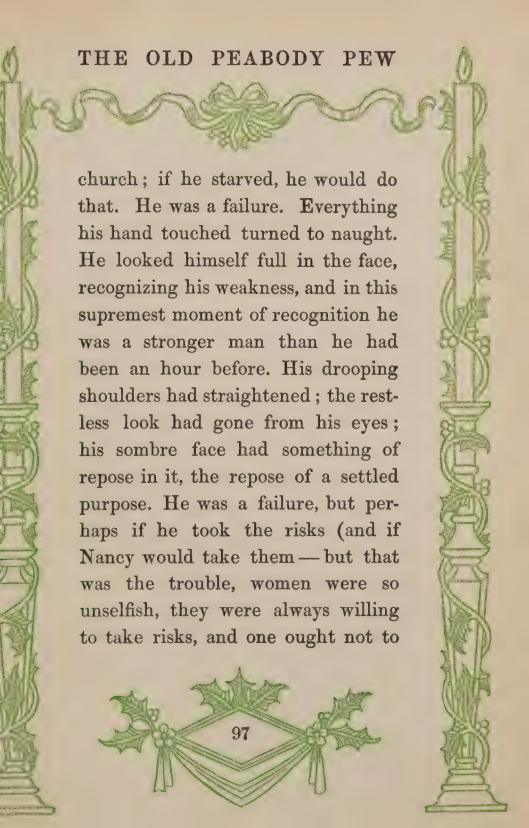
Rise, my soul, and stretch thy wings, Thy better portion trace.

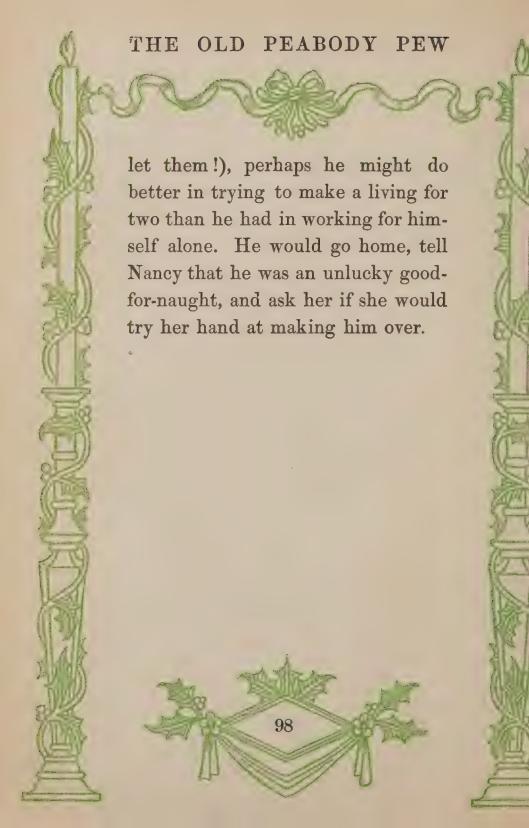
The melodeon gave the tune, and Nancy and he stood to sing, taking the book between them. His hand touched hers, and as the music of the hymn rose and fell, the future unrolled itself before his eyes: a future in which Nancy was his wedded wife; and the happy years stretched on and on in front of them until there was a row of little heads in the old Peabody pew, and mother and father could look proudly along the line at





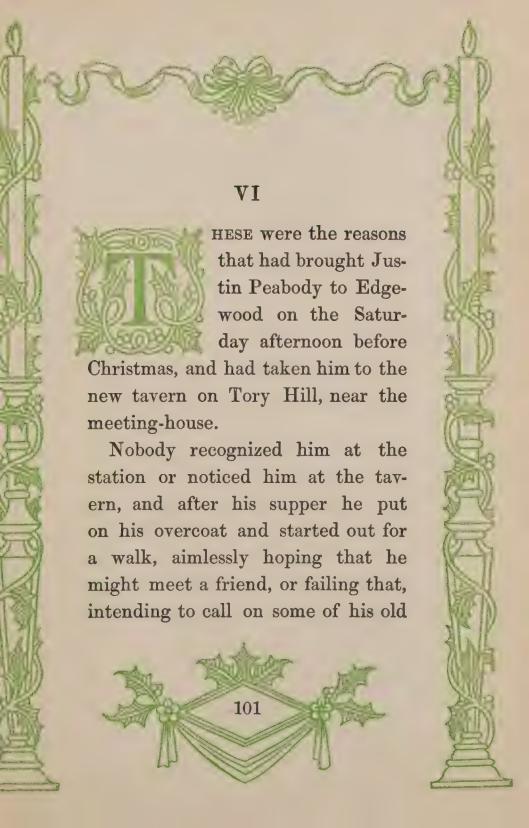








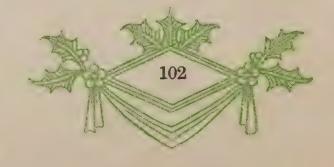


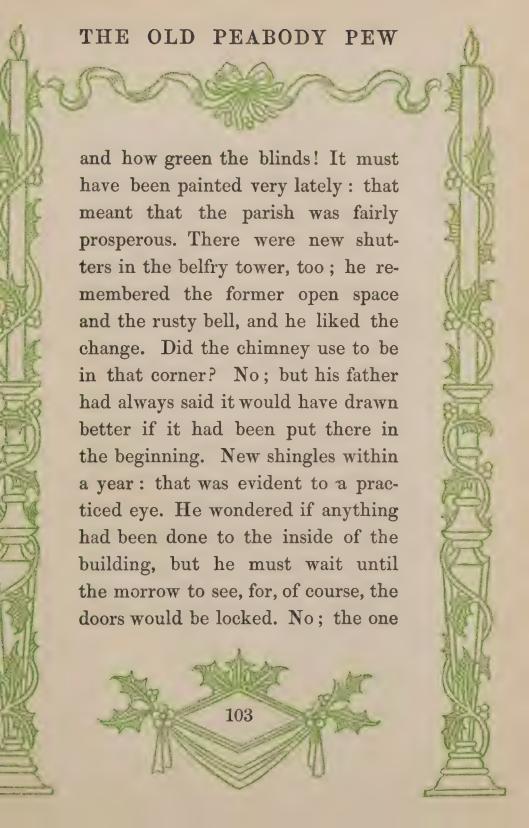


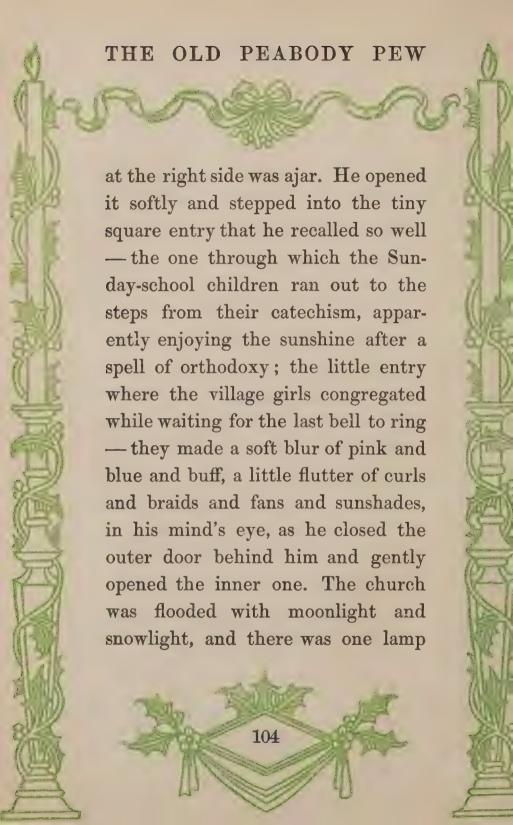


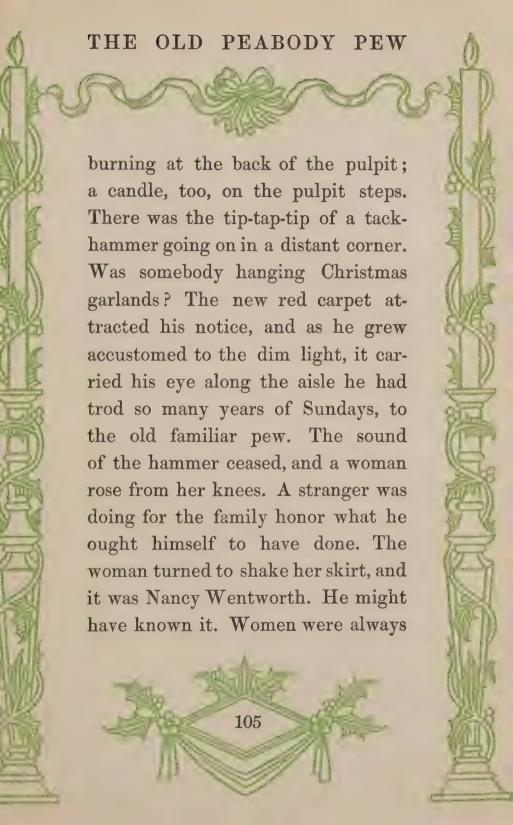
neighbors, with the view of hearing the village news and securing some information which might help him to decide when he had better lay himself and his misfortunes at Nancy Wentworth's feet. They were pretty feet! He remembered that fact well enough under the magical influence of familiar sights and sounds and odors. He was restless, miserable, anxious, homesick — not for Detroit, but for some heretofore unimagined good; yet, like Bunyan's shepherd boy in the Valley of Humiliation, he carried "the herb called Heartsease in his bosom," for he was at last loving consciously.

How white the old church looked,





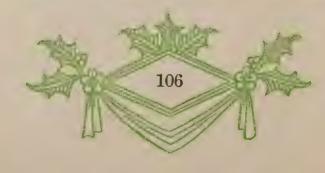


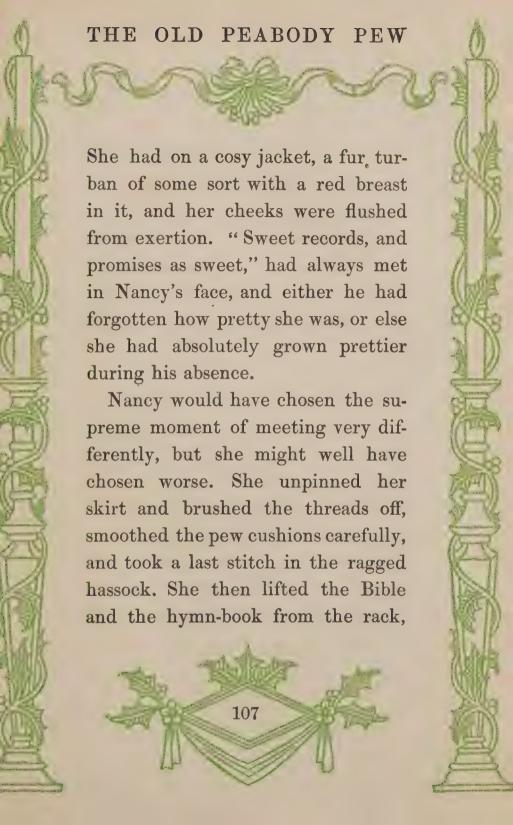


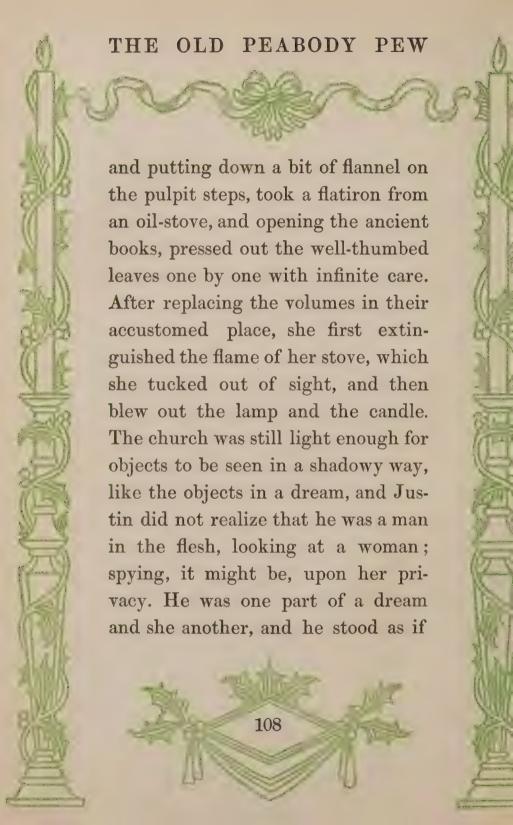


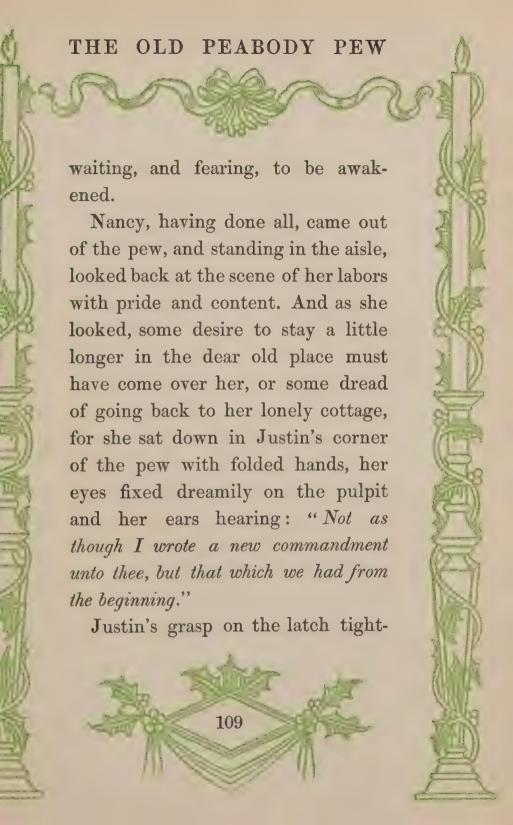
faithful; they always remembered old landmarks, old days, old friends, old duties. His father and mother and Esther were all gone; who but dear Nancy would have made the old Peabody pew right and tidy for the Christmas festival? Bless her kind womanly heart!

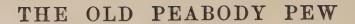
She looked just the same to him as when he last saw her. Mercifully he seemed to have held in remembrance all these years not so much her youthful bloom as her general qualities of mind and heart: her cheeriness, her spirit, her unflagging zeal, her bright womanliness. Her gray dress was turned up in front over a crimson moreen petticoat.







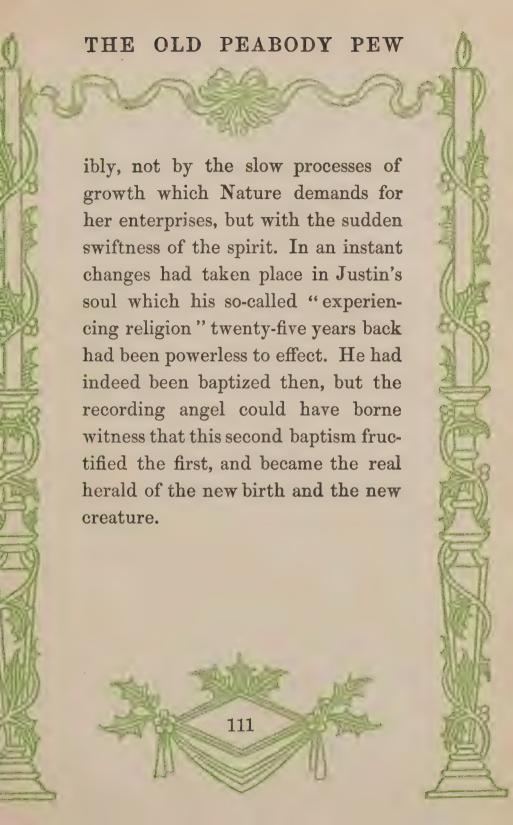




ened as he prepared to close the door and leave the place, but his instinct did not warn him quickly enough, after all, for, obeying some uncontrollable impulse, Nancy suddenly fell on her knees in the pew and buried her face in the cushions.

The dream broke, and in an instant Justin was a man — worse than that, he was an eavesdropper, ashamed of his unsuspected presence. He felt himself standing, with covered head and feet shod, in the holy temple of a woman's heart.

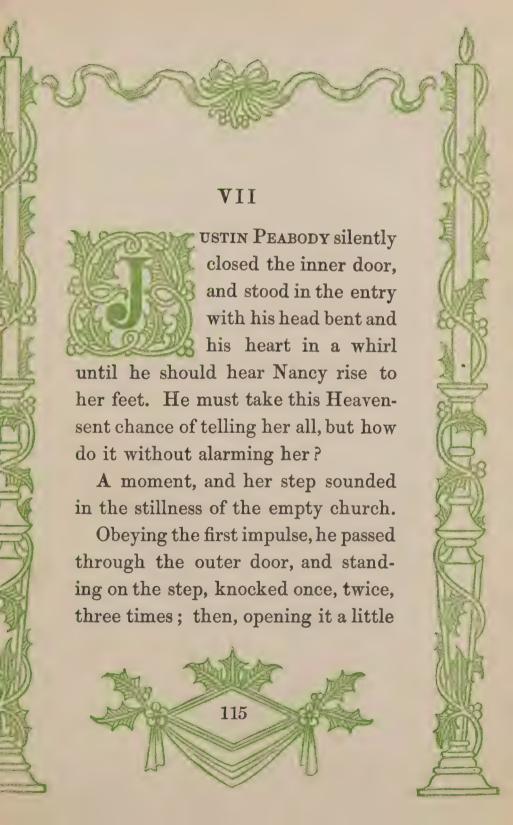
But his involuntary irreverence brought abundant grace with it. The glimpse and the revelation wrought their miracles silently and irresist-

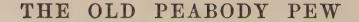










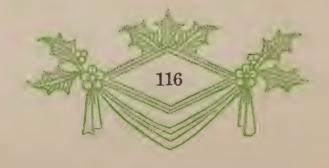


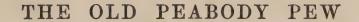
and speaking through the chink, he called, "Is Miss Nancy Wentworth here?"

"I'm here!" in a moment came Nancy's answer; and then, with a little wondering tremor in her voice, as if a hint of the truth had already dawned: "What's wanted?"

"You're wanted, Nancy, wanted badly, by Justin Peabody, come back from the West."

The door opened wide, and Justin faced Nancy standing halfway down the aisle, her eyes brilliant, her lips parted. A week ago Justin's apparition confronting her in the empty meeting-house after nightfall, even had she been prepared for it as now,



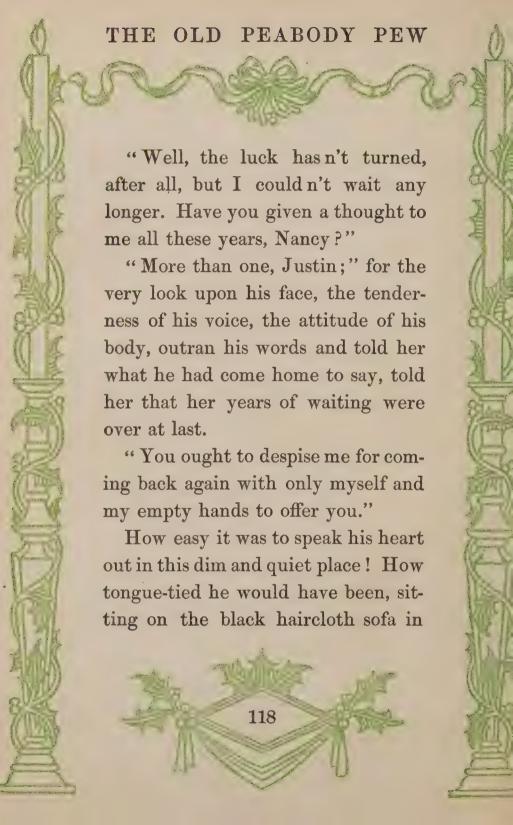


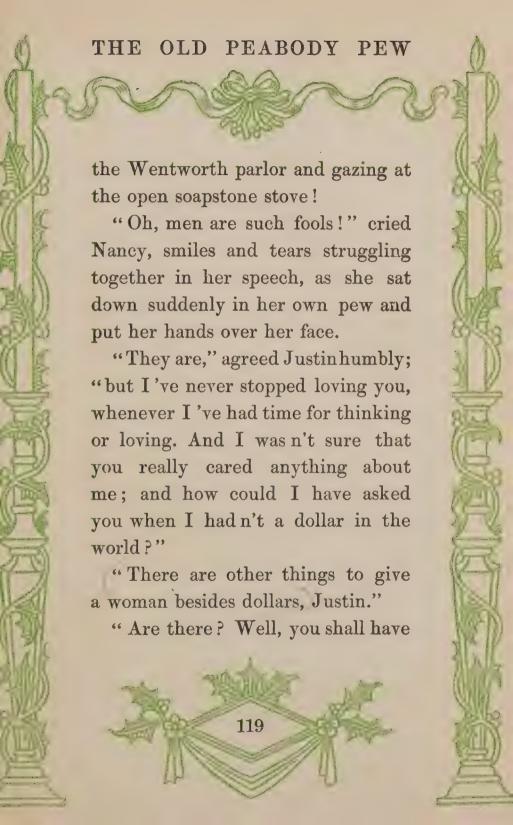
by his voice, would have terrified her beyond measure. Now it seemed almost natural and inevitable. She had spent these last days in the church where both of them had been young and happy together; the two letters had brought him vividly to mind, and her labor in the old Peabody pew had been one long excursion into the past in which he was the most prominent and the best-loved figure.

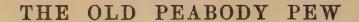
"I said I'd come back to you when my luck turned, Nancy."

These were so precisely the words she expected him to say, should she ever see him again face to face, that for an additional moment they but heightened her sense of unreality.









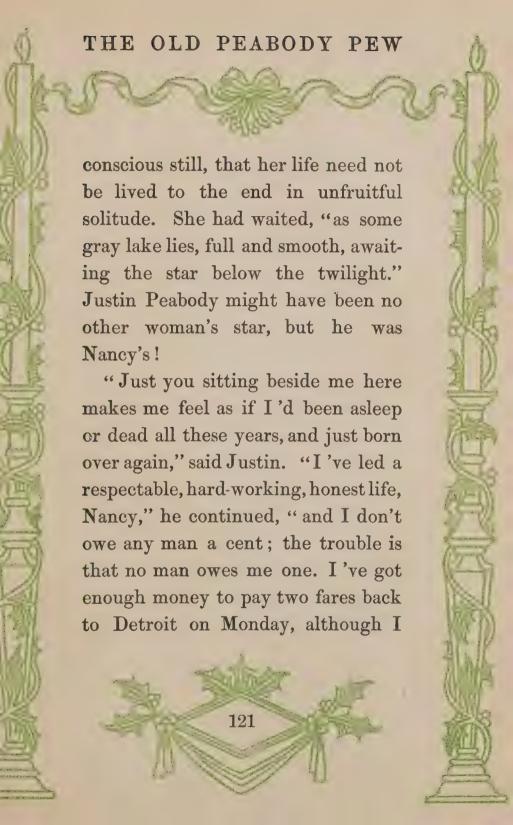
them all, every one of them, Nancy, if you can make up your mind to do without the dollars; for dollars seem to be just what I can't manage."

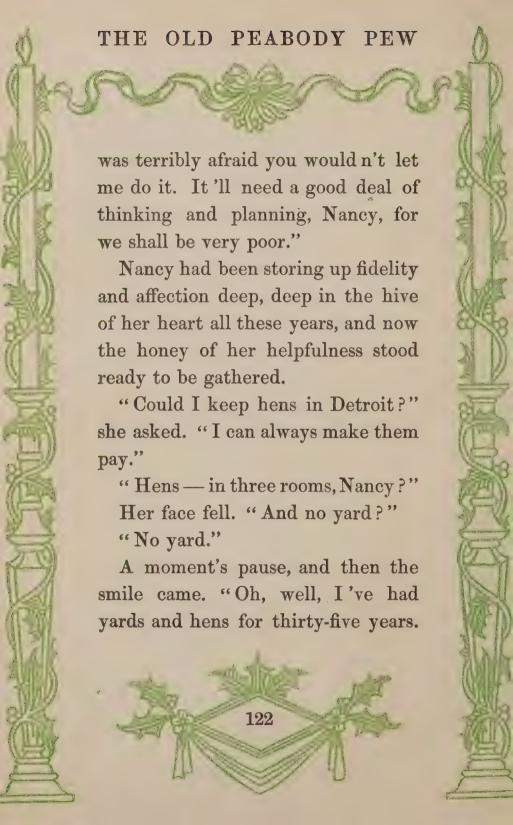
Her hand was in his by this time, and they were sitting side by side in the cushionless, carpetless Wentworth pew. The door stood open; the winter moon shone in upon them. That it was beginning to grow cold in the church passed unnoticed. The grasp of the woman's hand seemed to give the man new hope and courage, and Justin's warm, confiding, pleading pressure brought balm to Nancy, balm and healing for the wounds her pride had suffered; joy, too, half-

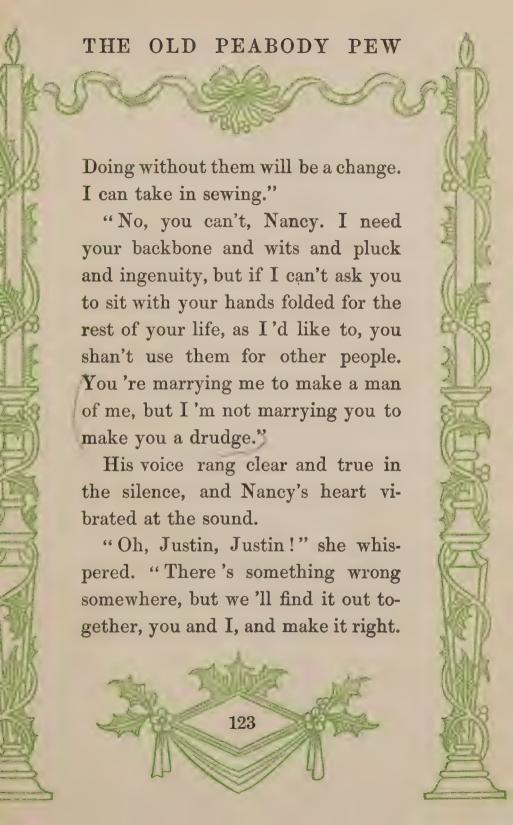


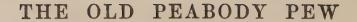






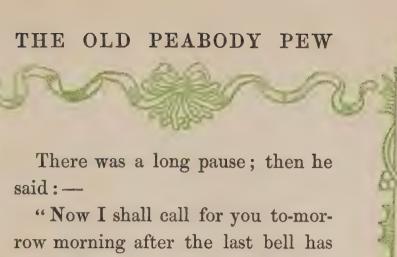




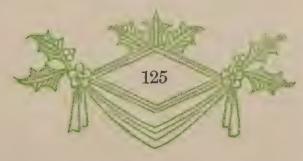


You're not like a failure. You don't even look poor, Justin; there is n't a man in Edgewood to compare with you, or I should be washing his dishes and darning his stockings this minute. And I am not a pauper! There'll be the rent of my little house and a carload of my furniture, so you can put the three-room idea out of your mind, and your firm will offer you a larger salary when you tell them you have a wife to take care of. Oh, I see it all, and it is as easy and bright and happy as can be!"

Justin put his arm around her and drew her close, with such a throb of gratitude for her belief and trust that it moved him almost to tears.



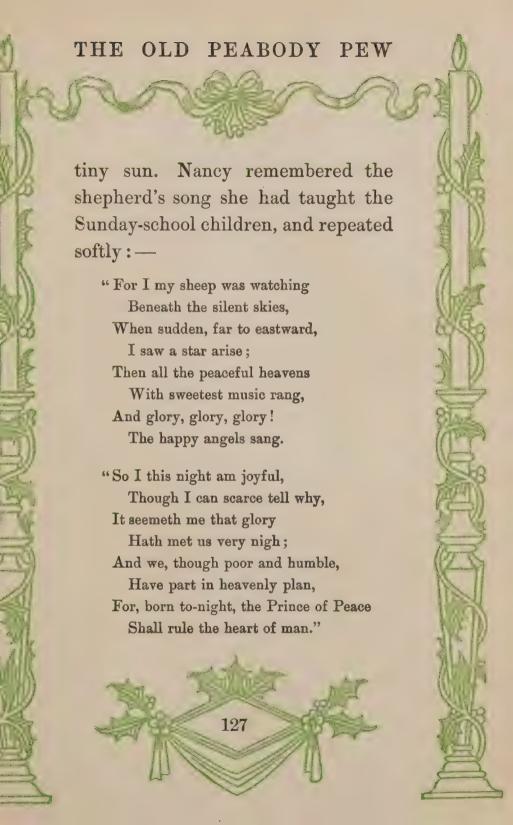
stopped ringing, and we will walk up the aisle together and sit in the old Peabody pew. We shall be a ninedays' wonder anyway, but this will be equal to an announcement, especially if you take my arm. We don't either of us like to be stared at, but this will show without a word what we think of each other and what we've promised to be to each other, and it's the only thing that will make me feel sure of you and settled in my mind after all these mistaken years. Have you got the courage, Nancy?"

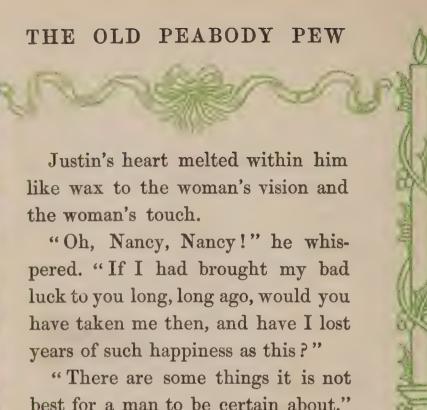




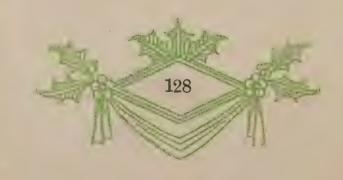
"I should n't wonder! I guess if I've had courage enough to wait for you, I've got courage enough to walk up the aisle with you and marry you besides!" said Nancy.—
"Now it is too late for us to stay here any longer, and you must see me only as far as my gate, for perhaps you have n't forgotten yet how interested the Brewsters are in their neighbors."

They stood at the little Wentworth gate for a moment, hand close clasped in hand. The night was clear, the air was cold and sparkling, but with nothing of bitterness in it, the sky was steely blue, and the evening star glowed and burned like a



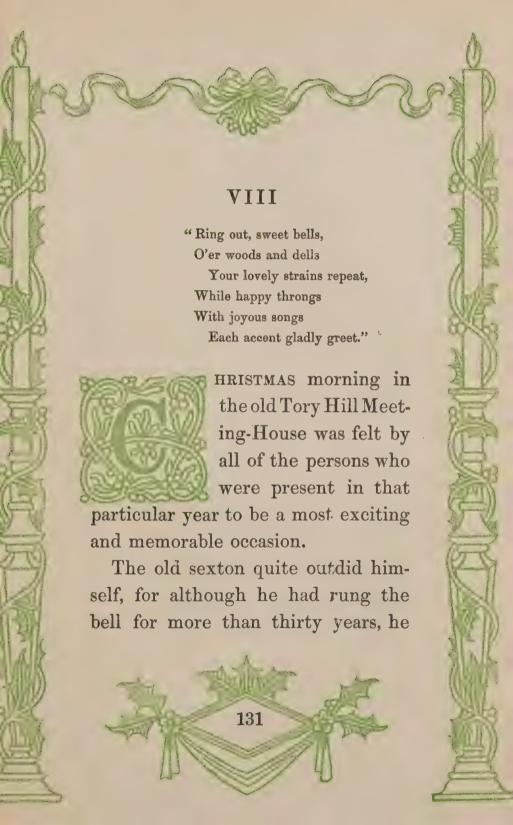


"There are some things it is not best for a man to be certain about," said Nancy, with a wise smile and a last good-night.





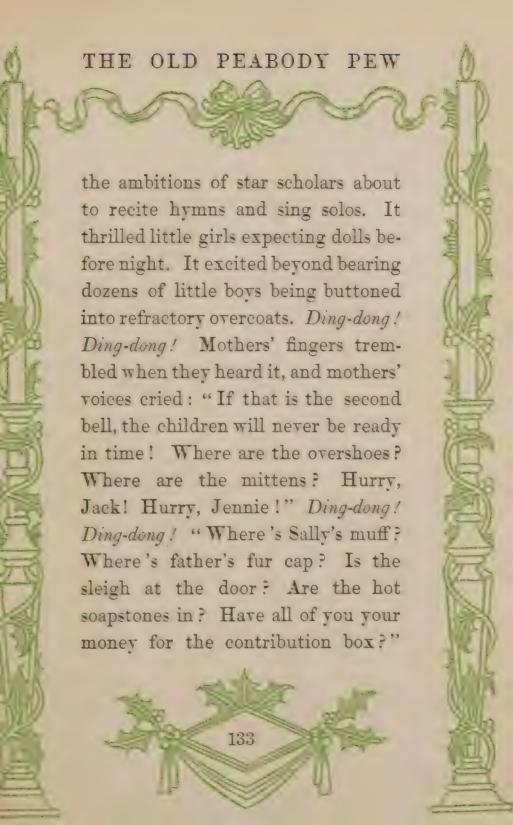




THE OLD PEABODY PEW

had never felt greater pride or joy in his task. Was not his son John home for Christmas, and John's wife, and a grandchild newly named Nathaniel for himself? Were there not spareribs and turkeys and cranberries and mince pies on the pantry shelves, and barrels of rosy Baldwins in the cellar and bottles of mother's root beer just waiting to give a holiday pop? The bell itself forgot its age and the suspicion of a crack that dulled its voice on a damp day, and, inspired by the bright, frosty air, the sexton's inspiring pull, and the Christmas spirit, gave out nothing but joyous tones.

Ding-dong! Ding-dong! It fired





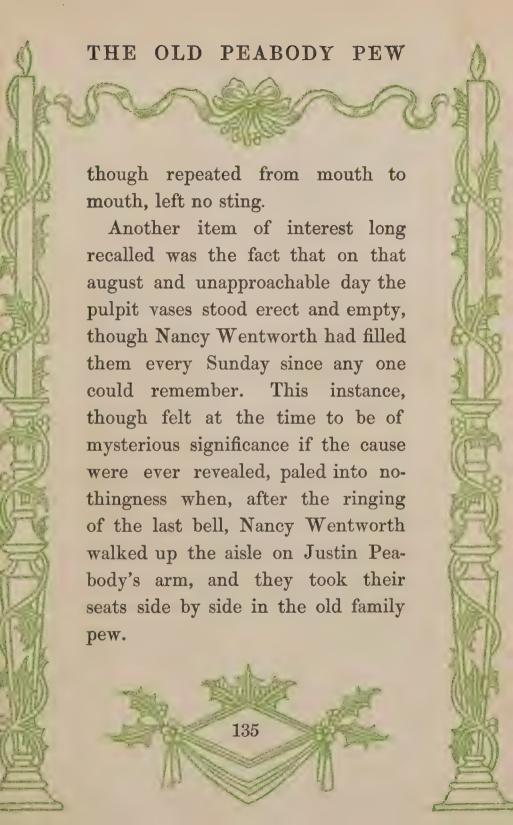
Ding-dong! Ding-dong! It was a blithe bell, a sweet, true bell, a holy bell, and to Justin pacing his tavern room, as to Nancy trembling in her maiden chamber, it rang a Christmas message:—

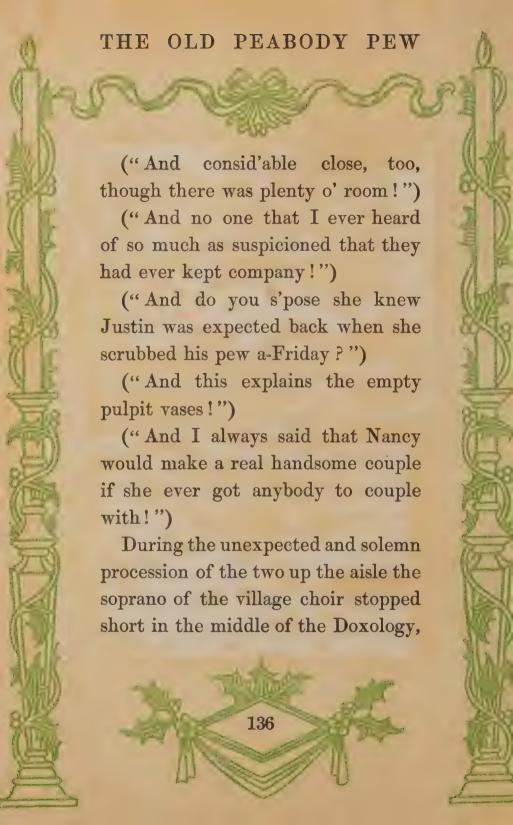
Awake, glad heart! Arise and sing; It is the birthday of thy King!

The congregation filled every seat in the old meeting-house.

As Maria Sharp had prophesied, there was one ill-natured spinster from a rival village who declared that the church floor looked like Joseph's coat laid out smooth; but in the general chorus of admiration, approval, and good-will, this envious speech,

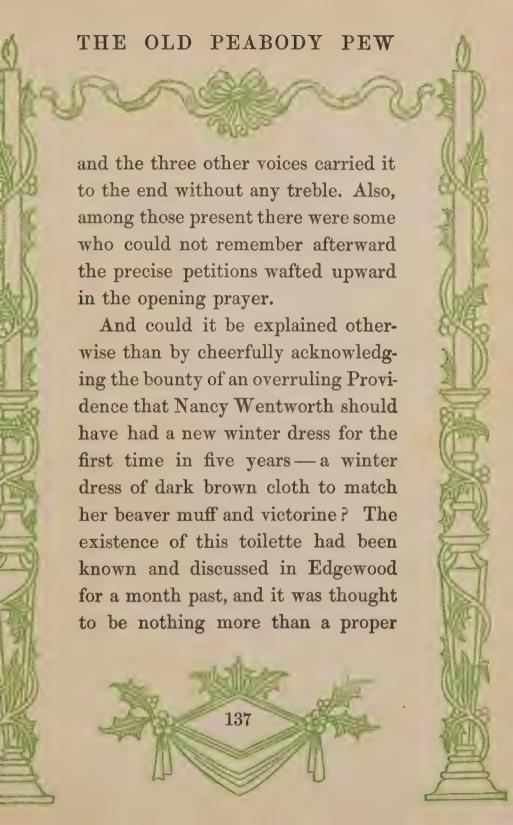


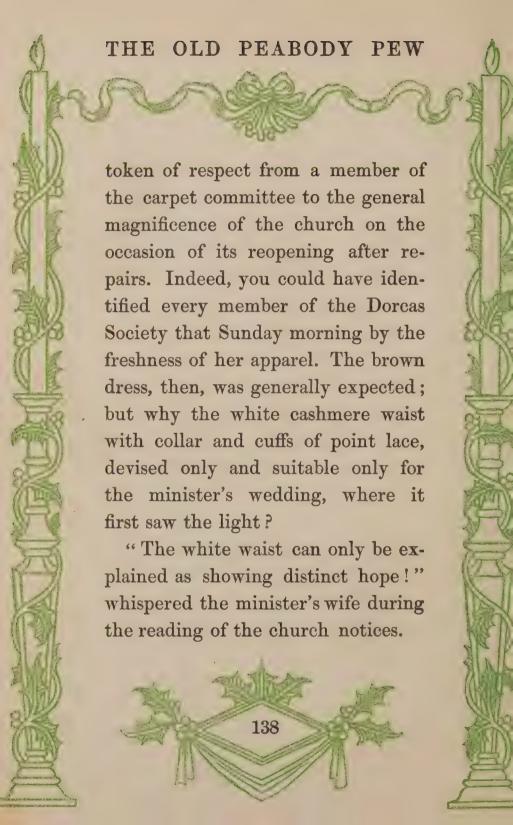


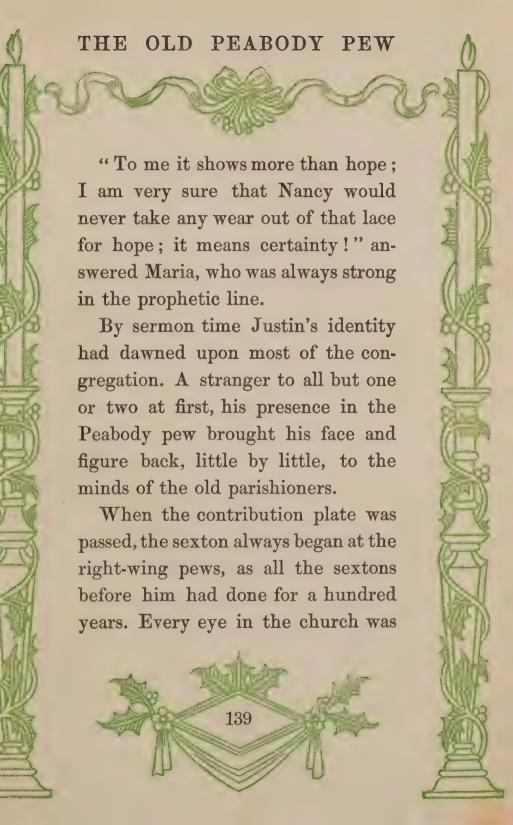


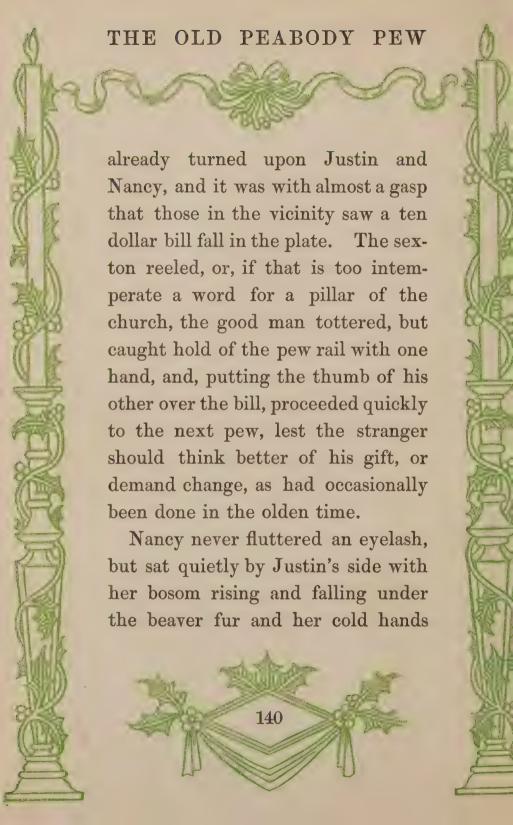


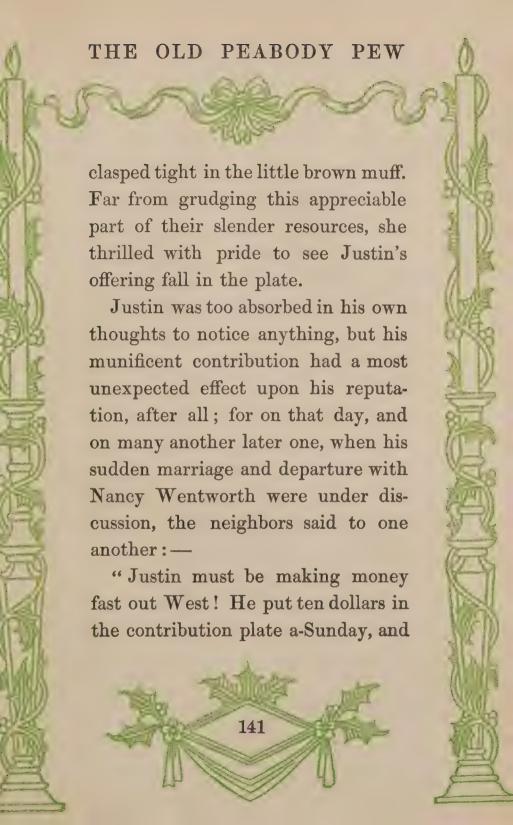


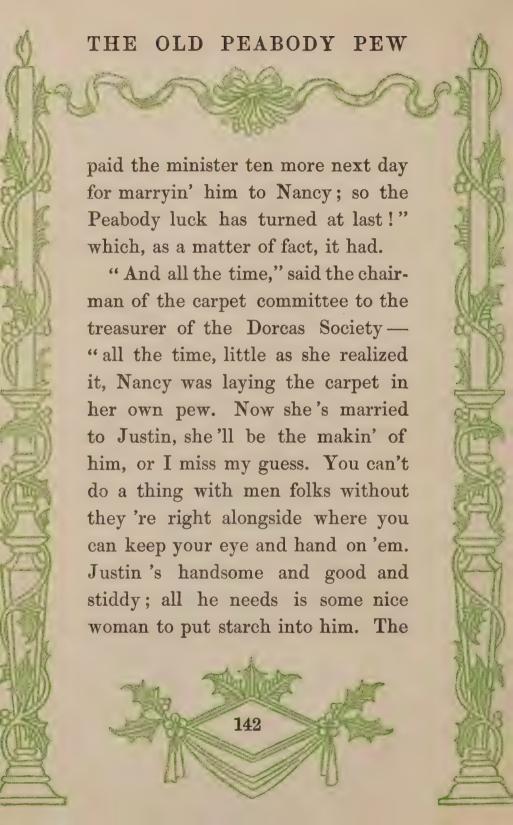


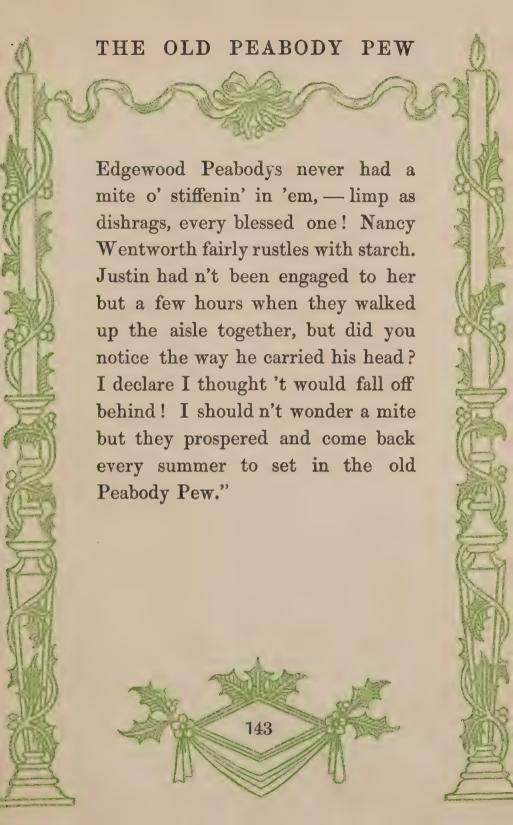




















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